

Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World – afternoon school 27 April 2024 Glasgow

A day conference organised by the [Republican Socialist Platform](#) on 2pm-5pm , Saturday 27th April 2024, [Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP](#)

Building Internationalism from Below in a Multi-Polar World.

Book here:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-internationalism-from-below-in-a-multipolar-world-tickets-858894254837>

Please note this event was rescheduled from 23 March due to speaker illness

Hear from Prof Gilbert Achcar, author of ‘The New Cold War’, and speakers from the Palestinian, Kurdish and Ukrainian solidarity movements.

The [Republican Socialist Platform](#) invites friends to discuss ‘Building Internationalism from Below in a Multipolar World’ in Glasgow on **Saturday 27th April 2024, 2pm-5pm.**

Our main speaker is **Professor Gilbert Achcar**, professor of development studies and international relations at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

His many books, published in a total of 15 languages, include:

- *The Clash of Barbarisms: The Making of the New World Disorder* (2002, 2006);

- *Perilous Power: The Middle East and U.S. Foreign Policy*, co-authored with Noam Chomsky (2007, 2008);
- *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (2010);
- *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* (2013);
- *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising* (2013); and
- *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprising* (2016).

Most recently, Professor Achcar is the author of [*The New Cold War: The US, Russia and China – From Kosovo to Ukraine*](#), which was published in 2023.

On the day, we will also be joined by speakers from the Palestinian, Kurdish and Ukrainian solidarity movements to provide an update on the current state of these struggles and what we can do to support them.

This event is free to attend, but we welcome donations to help us cover the costs of arranging speakers and the venue.

This public event will be governed by the RSP's [comradely conduct and care](#) policy.

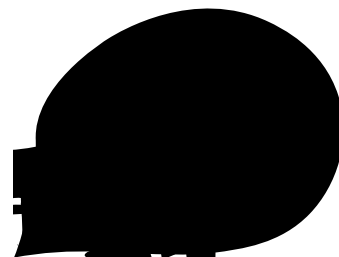
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Kurdistan: Scottish activist interviewed on Turkey's local elections

From a polling station in the Şirnak mountains – an interview with Hazel, an election observer from Scotland for the 31 March local elections in Turkey.

Sarah Glynn talks to one of two Scottish women who came to observe the elections at the invitation of the DEM Party [Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party – see note 1]. Hazel describes the militarisation of the region and the psychological pressure on voters. She witnessed the mass voting by soldiers brought in from outside the region, and saw the anger and worry in Şirnak (Şirnex) after their election was stolen by imported votes. And she emphasises the power of Kurdish resistance.

Hazel was observing the election at the invitation of the DEM Party, and was sent to village polling stations in the Şirnak (Şirnex) mountains. She describes a heavily militarised region, and militarised police and armoured vehicles outside the polling stations. Despite having become accustomed to the constant military presence, voters described feelings of intimidation and psychological pressure on account of the people outside the polling stations, who included families of AKP members.

Hazel saw a military helicopter that they were informed had brought soldiers to vote, and witnessed a long line of soldiers in civilian dress waiting to cast their ballots. But the observers were restricted in where they could go, and in inspecting voter lists.

She contrasted the victory celebrations in Diyarbakir (Amed) with the anger and worry in Şirnak – at the stolen election due to the votes of thousands of soldiers brought from outside, and at the prospect of the coming years of AKP control. And she described the immediate post-election repression and arrests in Şirnak.

Hazel attended protest statements in Amed, following the government's refusal to recognise the elected mayor of Van, and observed the importance of the presence of the Saturday Mothers.

She finished by trying to convey the sense of powerful resistance that she could feel in the Kurdish region and that she was reluctant to leave behind.

Below is the full transcript of the interview:



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So, Hazel, obviously a lot has happened since the actual election itself, but you were there to observe the election, so I think we should start with that. And I wondered, for the benefit of people who've not been to a Turkish election, if you could just describe – well, describe where you went, where you were – but also what the polling station is like, who's allowed in, what sort of privacy you get for voting, what sort of security there is to protect the ballots themselves, and whether there's pressure on the voters from people outside.

Yeah, so I've also been to the general election last year, which was a little bit different to this year's municipal elections, and I think it's also a little bit regional. So, all over Kurdistan region, also Turkey, it's generally in schools that people go to vote, and there are certain laws pertaining to the schools. So, for example, police shouldn't have weapons with them if they're actually inside the polling booth, like the room that people are voting in. And last year, there was a proper booth inside the polling stations that did afford people a bit more privacy, but I didn't personally see that at this one, but we were in quite a remote village in Şîrnak province, and it was called Beytüşşebap in Turkish, or İlkê in Kurdish. And yeah, there wasn't actually really any privacy, to be honest, in the rooms, but people will make their vote, and there's a sort of desk that people from each party – so DEM Party, AK Party, CHP – they all also sit in the room as well, and they're kind of responsible for overseeing the process. So, there's a bit of a collective management of the day, and there's quite a lot of people from each political party there as well, and also outside the schools, and I'm sure we'll get into this more later. It does depend on the region, so what we saw in İlkê or Beytüşşebap is, there's the Jandarma outside the schools, which is like militarised police, and there's also plainclothes police, and also uniformed, but there's the militarised and armored vehicles

outside.

So, did you get a sense that there was pressure on voters?

So, this is what we asked people, actually, who were there, and they did tell us that they did feel quite a bit of pressure, and I think that also, one thing to keep in mind is that, actually, there's a normalisation of the militarisation of the region, because there's checkpoints, there's military checkpoints when you move inside or outside of the cities in Kurdistan region. You can see the Jandarma (Gendarmerie), or the military – there's military bases all over the place, inside cities, etc. So, I think that there is a desensitisation, actually, as well; but of course, it does also create the psychological pressure, and for example, there was big families from the AK Party outside in the school grounds that we saw ourselves, and it was like an extended family. And people were also telling us this is also a type of psychological pressure, and they also felt intimidated. And it was also reported that – not where we were, but at another location – that some of the police did have weapons with them inside the schools, as well.

And anyway, they're allowed weapons just outside the schools.

Yes, they're allowed weapons outside of the schools, including the military vehicles themselves, which were literally parked right outside the gates, literally right opposite the entrance to the schools, multiple ones, actually. And also, one thing that we saw too is a military helicopter actually landing directly next to the school, which we were told was bringing soldiers in from Şirnak, like central, the actual city. And then, you know, we were in quite a remote area up the mountains, and we went to the first school, and then we went to two others, and then we were told, oh, go back to the first school, because now a lot of soldiers have just come. And you know, in the region, it's occupied militarily, so there are soldiers around, but people know who are the local soldiers.

You know, there's not thousands and thousands of soldiers in each place, usually. And when we went back to the first school, there was this long line of soldiers in plain clothes who were waiting to vote, and it was a very, very tense atmosphere, and we basically were quite abruptly asked to leave.

They wouldn't actually let us be present inside the polling station on that occasion. And yeah, we saw the helicopter, because it wasn't there when we first arrived, and then when we went to the schools, and then it had arrived, and then it left when we were there.

And were people able to see the voters' lists there? Were all these soldiers' names on the voters' lists?

So, one of our friends who was with us – one of our colleagues who was with us, who was also doing the observations, she has a press card, she's a journalist, she was allowed to look, but we were not allowed, and we were barred from looking at the lists. But there is many, many areas that people have had more access to the lists, and Şirnak is one of them, Şirnak Central, that has shown hundreds and hundreds of male names who – and no women at some addresses at all – but just hundreds and hundreds of male names, which aren't normal military bases. And what we were told is that this is basically soldiers coming from outside, who have been sent here by the state, and they are using other people's addresses to be able – because you know it's municipal, so you have to have like a specific local registered address to be able to vote in that district. And yeah, there's been like a lot of this military people coming and voting.

Over 6,000 in Şirnak, I think.

I know at the general election there was a lot of concern about guarding the ballot boxes, and then there were also problems about changes made when the votes were transferred

onto the final system. Were either of those issues this time around, or not?

Yeah, so this was definitely a thing last time. There was really clear evidence, for example, of votes getting transferred from DEM Party to MHP last time – well it was Yeşil Sol (Green Left) Party last year, but to MHP – and then they even ended up being transferred back in the appeals process at points, but I haven't heard of that myself this time. But also, it's one of those things that, you know, I think it's really hard sometimes to catch the ways that manipulation happens. And there's been really widespread observation amongst the independent observers about this practice with the soldiers, and this is something that – it's in specific areas, it doesn't happen in every single area, obviously – but it's, yeah, it's very difficult to appeal this process. And it didn't really seem like the ballot box issue was something that was really focused on this year, but they were already aware of the extra people signing up in the municipalities this time, so that has been the main focus this year.

I heard calls for guarding the ballot boxes, but I didn't hear of any actual concerns, I think.

I haven't heard of any myself.

And what immediately afterwards, as the results started coming in – I mean, before things started happening in Van – what was the general view of the elections from the DEM Party, because I think you were with people in the party after the elections as well.

Yeah, so I mean, I was in two different places – in Şirnak at first, and then I went back to Amed. And it was really different in both places, because, you know, in Şirnak, people were really hurting, because AK Party, for the central area, was elected again. And people were pretty furious, and also

worried. People are really worried about their future, and they're very angry, because they feel it's a very, very undemocratic process. And straight afterwards, on the same day as the elections, there was an attack on the party office by the police, and they arrested at least a dozen people, I think two dozen people – so two of the responsables in DEM Party, and then also quite a few youth as well. And when we were leaving the next day, we heard that the DEM Party members had been released, but a lot of the local young people were still being detained. And this is just like a kind of – I think that that's very symbolic, actually, because straight away, there's repression. And I mean – you just mentioned Van already, but even when there is a secure vote for the DEM Party, it doesn't mean that repression doesn't come. But when people don't have control of their own municipality, and that really affects, you know, funding, that affects education, that affects all of these different things. It affects also, you know, state propaganda. It affects state control, it affects state access to the border – for example, going south and east, and Şirnak is a really strategic location for the state's war policies. All of these things are affected in people's everyday lives. And somebody – not a DEM Party member, but just like a local person – was saying to me – he was saying, I'm really worried about my child's future. She's only three years old, but again, and again, and again, this keeps happening. I don't know what I can do. And then for DEM Party, people were really exhausted, but they were just busy the entire time. They were saying, we're going to appeal this, we're not going to stand for this, you know, they have cheated the system. And there was this feeling of loss.

But there wasn't much, I've seen in Western media. There's been a lot of dialogue around – oh, CHP, they've done so well; oh, this is such a win for democracy, because AKP have done really badly in this election. But people don't talk about the Kurdistan region, and don't see that AK Party can't even – they can't even keep hold of their own seats in the West. But

still, they try and coup them, basically, from the Kurdish regions, for their war policies, and for political reasons.

But when I went back to Amed – so I didn't see it myself, because we're in Şirnak, but I did see a lot of videos that showed there was a big celebration. People were really happy, but there was this focus on the other regions, it wasn't cut off. I think the first day, people were dancing in the streets, big, big celebrations, but by the time we got back, people were just really focused on Şirnak, and then also the other regions where AKP had sent soldiers, or just where they'd also just done well, you know. And then, also what happened in Van after. So, yesterday, all day, there was just announcements, protests. The people in DEM Party were incredibly busy, I have to say, from morning until evening, just full-on organising: visiting the family of the martyr, the shaheed [the DEM Party election official who was killed in a polling station dispute]; organising announcements, where police also repressed people, and two people were arrested from that – nothing like what we've seen in the further east regions, where people have been really being attacked viciously by the police, and, you know, there's a bigger answer, I think, there – but still, people were then focused on that..

It's not clear what's going to happen now. I was asking people. I was saying, do you think that.. will come again, is this going to be the policy of the state this time, because it happened so much last municipal election. And people's answer was just, we just don't know. We just don't know what's going to happen. It's just very unclear.

Which is frightening in itself, of course, the not knowing. So, I don't know when you had to leave that area. Were you able to see any of the protests about what was happening in Van?

In Amed. Yeah.

Reactions to the removal of the mayor, of the elected mayor in Van – were you able to see any of the reactions to that?

Yeah, in Amed, I went to a couple of the announcements and protests, and the thing is, like, even just an announcement, which is what it actually was – or announcement is maybe not quite the right translation, but a kind of, like a statement against what happened – like, even these things, when they're made publicly, are very, very, criminalised by the police. So, maybe in Western Europe you could make a statement saying, oh, the state did this, and it wasn't good, blah, blah. But, in Bakur [North Kurdistan/southeast Turkey] you're surrounded by armed police, armoured vehicles. Lots of people already have criminal cases or have spent a significant time in prison, and these are the kind of things that can certainly get people arrested again and sent to prison. So, there's quite high stakes, even with just standing up and denouncing ...

And there was one protest outside one of the legal centres, and that was made by DEM Party members, and two of the MPs, so one person was Abbas Şahin, and then also Pınar as well. They're both MPs in Amed region. And then also, directly after that, there was another announcement in a park in Amed, and that was by the Democracy Platform, which is particularly, like a labour platform.

And there were people from other parties or from...



Vigil for forced disappearances

Yeah, I mean, in general, the people who attended, it wasn't only DEM Party members who were there. It's just people in the community, basically, people who agree with the fact that what happened in Van was extremely undemocratic and unfair,

and it didn't reflect the will of the people. And the second event, I'm not sure, I would need to find out exactly which groups it was present, actually, and yeah, but there was, like, a kind of mix of people from, like, various groups, and also non-affiliated people as well. Not everyone was specifically a member of a specific organisation who was present. There was, oh, and the Saturday Mothers as well, the mothers of the martyrs, and also of the missing people who had disappeared in the 90s. So, when everyone was going to this court in the first announcement, the first denunciation, some people tried to enter. And they weren't allowed, of course, they weren't allowed to go in, but there was this big crowd of people, maybe a couple hundred people, and the mothers who, you know, they were walking as a group, and they have the white veils on their head, they're very, very

distinctive. And they're really, really, really strong embodiments of the principles of the struggle there, and what people sacrificed, and what people continue to do as well, despite such a deep and painful struggle. They tried to get in, and when they first came, everyone started clapping and applauding, and people were chanting. It was really, really beautiful to see how people reacted to their presence as part of that struggle, and part of the wider statement. And they were also at the second denunciation as well, which was in the park. They didn't speak at it, but there was – yeah, like I said, it was kind of a mix of people present, and – just one second, I'm just gonna check something... I had a thing where I wrote down the chants that people were making, but I'm just struggling to find it...

You were looking for the chants that were said at these demonstrations, so do give us some examples.

Yeah, so, well, one chant that people were chanting is, long live the resistance of Van, so, "Biji Berxwedana Wanê", and also, "Resistance is Life", and also, "Kurdistan will become a grave for fascism", and, yeah, I thought it was just a very – like, every time somebody would make a speech, the young people in the crowd would start leading the chants. Yeah, that was all.

So, is there anything else you want to add before I let you go and catch your plane?

It's really hard to – I thought there is something that I want to add, but it's really hard to put into words. And I feel really, like I really wish that I wasn't leaving now, because the different layers of society that say, and one of the other chants, the translation in English is, "we will win by resisting". I think that that is just such a present spirit and energy, and that is something that is really beautiful and inspiring; and yeah, I'm sure that people really will resist. And if it really is the case that the mayor has, again, been reappointed, I think that that really just shows like that chant, that we will win by resisting, is completely true. And whatever happens now, because I think that the democratic process is completely – it's not respected in Kurdistan region especially. And I think that we need to stop invisibilising the politics there, when we talk about Turkey as a whole, and the democratic process in Turkey as a whole, and, you know, not see CHP as this kind of – oh great, everything's answered now, blah, blah, blah. I think that, yeah, the struggle is really alive, and we also need to find ways to support it, that's all.

Thank you, and bring that spirit of struggle back to Scotland with you. Thanks very much.

Thank you for having me.

Sarah Glynn is an activist from Scottish Solidarity with

Kurdistan who writes for Medya News.

For a full report of the local election results and the successful resistance movement to the annulment and subsequent reinstatement of the successful DEM candidate in the municipality of Van, see Sarah Glynn's article 'Resistance Works!'

<https://medyanews.net/resistance-works-a-weekly-news-review/>

*Interview originally published by Medya News:
<https://medyanews.net/from-a-polling-station-in-the-sirnak-mountains-an-interview-with-hazel-an-election-observer-from-scotland/>*

*Note by Ecosocialist.scot: [1] **DEM Party – Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party** is a pro-Kurdish political party in the Turkish state. It is the legal successor of the Green Left Party (Yesil Sol) and with the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) handing over its work to this party in 2023, it has become the latest iteration of Kurdish interests in Turkey. It won 10 provinces and 2.6 million votes (5.7%), the fourth highest vote in the elections of 31 March.*

Photo: DEM Party Election Rally, Medya News

Rising Clyde Episode 18: Scotland's Circular Economy Bill

The latest issue of Rising Clyde, the Scottish climate justice show hosted by Iain Bruce is now available on YouTube thanks to [Independence Live](#).

The Show looks at the [Circular Economy Bill now under discussion in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood](#). Iain talks to the Scottish Government's Circular Economy Minister, [Lorna Slater](#), MSP for the [Scottish Green Party](#), as well as Kim Pratt of [Friends of the Earth Scotland \(FOES\)](#) and Franciele Sobierai of [Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council \(ELREC\)](#).

Rising Clyde Show – the Scottish climate justice show.

Rising Clyde examines the key issues and the big challenges facing the struggle for climate justice in Scotland. After the surprisingly big and hugely diverse protests in Glasgow during COP26, how can the breadth of that movement be held together, how can we build on its energy?



- After the suspension of Cambo, can the movement stop any more new oil or gas projects in the North Sea?
- How can we wind down the whole oil and gas industry in Scotland in this decade, while ensuring no layoffs and decent new jobs for all those affected?
- Was the Scotwind auction a major step on the transition to renewable energy, or a sell-off of the family silver?
- How can an independent Scotland tolerate one of the most unequal and damaging systems of land ownership on the planet

For half an hour on the first Monday of each month, we'll be talking to activists and experts about these and many other issues that will shape this country's future.

The host of Rising Clyde, **Iain Bruce**, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.

Playlist... To see previous episodes, start the video below, then click on the top right icon.

<https://youtu.be/0qK7olrAtvk?list=PLxc3IWpJ3vJZLQg9hFjnGWvfvSHdIrnXG>

Main picture: [Friends of the Earth Scotland/Government-wide Programme for a Circular Economy, Netherlands, 2016](#)

Better Buses for Strathclyde People's Rally, Friday 15 March 9am, Glasgow

Better Buses for Strathclyde are holding a People's Rally to campaign for publicly controlled and publicly owned bus services across Strathclyde Region and demanding the public body, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, begin the process of using new powers under Scotland's Transport Act 2019.

Join them outside SPT headquarters

Friday 15 March 2024, 9am

**SPT Offices, 131 St Vincent Street,
Glasgow, G2 5JF**

Facebook event: [Better Buses for Strathclyde People's Rally](#)

We need a really strong turn out. It's the people of Strathclyde vs. the private bus company bosses in the fight to take back our buses!

BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE RESOURCES

- [Better Buses for Strathclyde Campaign Leaflet](#)
- [Campaign Briefing for SPT Board Members](#)
- [Campaign Timeline](#)

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A Fine Step Forward: The Scottish Socialist Youth's First Conference

Jennifer Debs reports for Heckle.scot on the first conference of Scottish Socialist Youth.

The morning of Sunday 28th January saw a number of us gathered in Glasgow's Civic House, thankful to have the walls of the old printworks between us and the dreadful weather. Members, for the most part, of the [Scottish Socialist Youth](#) (SSY), we were there for the organisation's 2024 national conference – the first such that the SSY has ever had.

As the SSY is a fairly new organisation, I will give a sketch of the group's development before discussing the conference. Born in 2021 of the familiar process by which the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) disappoints, frustrates, exhausts and then emits eager young members, the SSY stems from a disaffected student branch of the SSP which decided to go it alone. Stirling University was ground-zero, and it still remains the SSY's main centre, boasting the majority of members.

In the last year however, the SSY has been striking out in new directions and expanding, with the greatest success in Glasgow so far. There are growing links with comrades in Dundee and Edinburgh, and working groups in Falkirk, Fife and East Lothian, which look promising for the year ahead.

This growth is a result of the SSY's campaigning work in the course of 2023, on issues like [drug deaths](#), public transport, republicanism, Palestine solidarity and Scottish independence. This has brought the SSY beyond Stirling more and more, and has been winning it supporters and new members from across Scotland. I am one of them, and I am not alone in being attracted to the SSY by the fact that it is an autonomous youth organisation with a broad variety of ideas and perspectives, not beholden to any political party or sect, nor to the leaden decree of some wizened leading comrade who has been in control for roughly thirty years. What a fresh breeze in comparison to the usual sort of lefty youth wing!

This increasing national scope is what spurred the conference in January. The key theme of the day's political content was that of campaigning beyond parliamentary activity. We are soon headed for a general election of course, but with the outlook so grim and the left being as puny and irrelevant as it is, the prospects for a meaningful intervention are pretty much nil. So, it's crucial that a group like the SSY directs its limited resources in directions that will actually make a difference, and which will help to cohere a stronger and more vibrant socialist movement at a national level.

In that spirit, there were contributions by guest speakers from Living Rent, This is Rigged, and Palestine Action, who each in their own way elaborated on the role of youth in organisational activity and direct action, whether in challenging the encroaching creep of bureaucracy that plagues every union, in building community solidarity amid climate chaos and austerity, or in breaking up the war-machines of imperialism.



To see these groups brought together on a single platform was an encouraging sight, and it is hoped that the SSY will not only continue to connect militants from such varied ends of the movement, but also that it will lend an active and useful hand to their struggles. Tenants' unionism, environmentalism, anti-imperialism, and more – the SSY must aim to be the kind of socialist group that can integrate these perspectives and organisational “spheres” and give a unified expression to all of them.

But this cannot be done in a dogmatic or opportunistic way, by entryism and ultimatums, by take-overs and smash-and-grab recruitment tactics. Instead, the SSY needs to be honest and helpful in its relations with other campaigns, rendering concrete, disinterested assistance to them, and, by being a genuine friend to the cause, demonstrating the utility of our socialist analysis, politics and practice. This will do a great deal more good than turning up with newspapers, wagging an all-knowing Marxist finger, and wishing other campaigns could just see that capitalism is the main problem already, simply because we say so.

This puts me in mind of the role that a good socialist group *should*, and indeed must, play as a co-ordinating centre for all the struggles, democratic and economic, domestic and global, in which the working class has an interest. A place

where the working class in all its variety of identity can find a political home, because the group stands tall as an authentic tribune of the people, capable of championing everything from the fight for increased wages to the civil rights of transgender people.

There is an old conception that the memory of the working class is its party – that is to say, that a revolutionary organisation can serve as the “historical memory” of the proletariat, a living store-house of lessons and knowledge taken from the experience of the class struggle in its widest sense, and therefore a guide that can prepare and organise the working class for future battles. The task of becoming a group like this is one that confronts every socialist organisation, whether it is conscious of it or not, whether it calls itself vanguardist or anarchist, whether it tries and fails or just reneges on the responsibility immediately.

To build a truly revolutionary organisation, to achieve and maintain principled unity, to carry forward and generalise all the struggles of the people – all of this is certainly a very difficult task, and there is absolutely no guarantee the SSY will succeed where most have failed. But we’re still new and fresh, and up for trying. At the very least, by bringing together different social movements to discuss and share ideas as it did at the conference, the SSY is off to a good start.

As to the democratic content of the conference, this consisted in votes on a battery of motions for SSY policy, and in the presentation of candidates for the national committee elections. The motions spanned a variety of causes, including policy on the de-commercialisation of housing, advocating for rural and island areas of Scotland, universalist urban planning, diversity and inclusion within the SSY, and the preservation of small music venues. These motions give a good view into the diverse interests that animate the SSY’s membership, and it is exciting to see that there is a sense within the organisation that it has a lot of potential to

tackle many different social issues.

Unfortunately, one area where the conference could be criticised is around the national committee elections. Of all the positions, only the national chairperson was contested, the rest just seeing an incumbent up for re-election. This is never an ideal situation to be in, but for the moment it is also an understandable one, given the SSY is only really beginning to grow and establish new branches. However, for the good of the democratic health of the organisation, it is very important that the SSY encourages more members to stand for positions in the future. From what I have seen so far, I am hopeful that this will be done.

All these matters finished and the conference concluded, we repaired to the pub for the obligatory post-event pints, and there's not much that you need to know about that. In any case, I drank a toast to the SSY, and so should you!

Look out for us in 2024!

Photos courtesy of the Scottish Socialist Youth.

Ukrainians Haven't Been Forgotten

Connor Beaton writes for [Heckle.scot](https://heckle.scot), publication of the [Republican Socialist Platform](https://republican-socialist-platform.org), on the recent day school in February 2024 organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland.



A landmark seminar organised by the [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland](#) (USCS) began on Saturday [3rd February 2024] before last with the uplifting news that public service union UNISON's Scottish council had just [voted unanimously to affiliate](#) to the relatively young organisation. With the war featuring less and less prominently in the media, this was welcomed as an encouraging signal that Scottish trade unionists have not forgotten about their Ukrainian counterparts as the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine looms.

Taking place under the title 'Ukraine's fight is our fight', the four-hour-long event in Edinburgh's Augustine United Church – which was [live-streamed in its entirety](#) – boasted an impressive range of speakers, many of whom were Ukrainian socialists, trade unionists and environmentalists. This made the event a refreshing departure from many other left-wing forums in Scotland and the rest of these islands in which the war has tended to be discussed with very little, if any, input from or reference to the views of Ukrainians.

USCS was established in the immediate aftermath of the all-out invasion in February 2022, initially as an outgrowth of the longer-running London-based [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#) (USC) but increasingly functioning as an independent organisation in its own right.

It rejects the argument advanced by some sections of the left,

particularly those in and around the Stop the War Campaign, that the war in Ukraine should be understood principally as a conflict between Russia and NATO in which socialists should be neutral; instead, taking its cue from [left-wing Ukrainians](#), it recognises that Ukraine is fighting a defensive war against Russian imperialism in which it deserves support from those who uphold the right of nations to self-determination.

This event, by far the most substantial and successful event organised by USCS in its short existence, served two purposes: firstly, to aid socialists in Scotland in better understanding the current situation in Ukraine and the impact of the war on Ukrainian workers, the economy and the environment; and secondly, to focus minds on how we can organise the most effective and practical solidarity from Scotland to Ukraine.

Pictured: Dr Taras Fedirko speaking at the USCS seminar in Edinburgh.



Radical perspectives

The day suitably began with a harrowing report from Olesia Briazgunova, international secretary of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KPVU), who joined the event remotely from Kyiv. She set out a now-familiar description of the dual role of Ukrainian trade unions in supporting their members on the frontlines while also defending their interests against employers and the state, all against the backdrop of

martial law which has made strikes and union rallies illegal. The KPVU has called on western governments to continue to provide economic, humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine (not an uncontroversial demand in trade unions here), to impose stronger sanctions on Russia and to use frozen Russian assets towards a “just reconstruction”.

Solidarity greetings were subsequently heard from Labour MSP Katy Clark, SNP MP Tommy Sheppard, Green MSP Ross Greer and PCS assistant general secretary John Moloney – a reflection of the broad nature of USCS, whose members consciously decided not to have a narrow focus on the trade union movement but to instead build support for Ukraine across Scotland’s trade unions, political parties and social movements.

An exceptionally good, if sobering, presentation was given by Dr Taras Fedirko, a political and economic anthropologist at the University of Glasgow. He explained in clear terms the extent to which the Ukrainian economy is now overwhelmingly dependent on western aid. Ukraine’s defence spending alone was greater in 2022 than the entire state budget in 2021; the country’s annual tax revenue just about covers military salaries.

Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF), alarmed by this unsustainable reliance on other countries, has encouraged the previously libertarian Zelenskyy government to pursue progressive taxation (an irony observed by LSE’s Luke Cooper in a [recent article](#) which Fedirko mentioned and endorsed).

Fedirko’s presentation left an impression of two distinct paths open to Ukraine: one in which the massive labour shortages created by the war, combined with the expansion of the state and a turn towards progressive taxation, provides enough leverage to organised labour to push for a social-democratic reconstruction; or one in which Ukraine becomes an “Eastern European Israel” with a powerful military-industrial complex orienting the entire economy and society around

confrontation with Russia. With well-paid British consultants among western experts deployed to Ukraine to shape economic strategy, there is an acute danger of the British and European left leaving the question of Ukraine's economic future uncontested and allowing the right to exclusively shape it.



Pictured: Iryna Zamuruieva speaking at the USCS seminar in Edinburgh.

Environmental crisis

A similarly thorough presentation by Iryna Zamururieva, an ecological activist based in Edinburgh, highlighted the scale of the environmental damage caused by the war, much of which will have a cross-generational impact. For example, up to 40% of Ukrainian land is now mined.

While the full extent of the damage can understandably not be determined until areas which are either occupied or the site of active conflict become safe for researchers to access, it has already been established that hundreds of species of animals and plants are [at risk of extinction](#) (alarming not least because biodiversity is [recognised as a bulwark against climate change](#)) while fresh water, already in short supply in Ukraine as a result of climate change, has been widely contaminated by destructive actions such as the [flooding of coal mines](#).

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam last June, leading to devastating flooding in the Kherson region, is perhaps the best known environmental disaster arising from the war in Ukraine. Zamuruieva pointed out, however, that the construction of the dam in the 1950s was also an environmental disaster, motivated in large part by the need for fresh water in Crimea during the deportation of the Tatars – a Russian colonial crime. She also highlighted other environmental disasters; in one case which received remarkably little publicity, [more than four million chickens died](#) at Europe's largest poultry farm after the occupation made it impossible to feed them.

With fossil fuels playing a significant role both in driving and funding the war, the Scottish climate movement forms a critical part of global anti-imperialist struggle, Zamuruieva put across. She encouraged USCS supporters to attend [Climate Camp Scotland](#) this summer, as well as to pressure the Scottish Parliament to take more action; opportunities include Labour MSP Monica Lennon's [proposed bill on ecocide](#), and the Scottish Government's [ongoing consultation](#) on a national adaptation plan that also encompasses international action.

A more technical presentation on Ukraine's major environmental challenges was separately given by [Ecoaction](#), a Ukrainian NGO which is to receive a £400 donation from USCS – the group's first international donation.

A divided left

Very little of the day was dedicated to discussing the way in which the war has divided the left internationally, but where these came to the fore most clearly was in a session on self-determination led by Irish writer Conor Kostick, who has [previously written and delivered talks](#) about Ukraine and the politics of James Connolly.

Though at times veering too close to a speculative exercise

along the lines of 'what would Connolly say if he were here today?', Kostick correctly pointed out that Connolly was prepared to accept arms from a rival imperialist power, i.e. the German Empire, in order to wage a struggle for national liberation against the British Empire. Condemning Ukrainians for soliciting and accepting arms from NATO countries may be a legitimate political position, he said, but those advocating for it can't claim they've derived their analysis from Connolly.

Neither can they claim to stand in the tradition of Lenin, added Mike Picken of Ecosocialist.scot, highlighting the Bolshevik revolutionary's [writing on self-determination](#) and in particular his opposition to annexations ("because annexation violates the self-determination of nations, or, in other words, is a form of national oppression"). This did not appear to convince Graham Campbell, now an SNP councillor, who said he had been a Leninist for almost all of his life but had since come to believe that the Soviet project was imperialist from the very beginning, owing to its suppression of Ukrainian self-determination and the subsequent Holodomor.

Leslie Cunningham, national organiser for Scotland in [rs21](#), put across [their position](#) that Ukraine has a right to obtain weapons from whoever is willing to supply them, but also that the UK should not provide them. Everyone in the room, including the rs21 comrades, seemed to accept this was a bit of a fudge.

Most socialist opponents of western arms supplies to Ukraine rely on the specious argument that these supplies are prolonging the war, and that ending these supplies would quickly result in peace. USCS's persuasive counter-argument, which could have been more clearly articulated from the platform on the day, is that it is up to Ukrainians to decide the extent to which they resist the Russian invasion and occupation, and when to pursue peace and on what terms. This argument was recently and very coherently made by Colin

Turbett in the [Scottish Left Review](#).

Allan Armstrong, a member of the [Republican Socialist Platform](#) who has incidentally [written extensively](#) about Connolly and his politics, said a withdrawal of western support for Ukraine would inevitably lead to something resembling the Munich Agreement. Ukrainian independence is vastly preferable to the alternative seen in Donetsk, Luhansk or Chechnya, he said – fascism of a far more aggressive kind [than is seen](#) in the core of Russia.



Pictured: Ukrainian students and refugees carry a flag through Dundee city centre to mark the first anniversary of the Russian invasion in February 2023.

Building the movement

The biggest takeaway from this event is that USCS is capable of organising discussions of a remarkably high calibre, a great achievement particularly in the context of wider post-pandemic organisational challenges being faced by virtually all of the left in Scotland. There was a welcome sense of comfort with USCS's political breadth and good-natured debate

flowed easily from this. It was great that printed materials from Ukrainian writers, including English editions of the Ukrainian left journal [Commons/Spilne](#), were on offer.

The second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, landing on Saturday 24th February, will overlap with Palestine solidarity demonstrations in towns and cities across Scotland. There is a valuable opportunity here to connect the Ukrainian and Palestinian peoples' struggles through a self-determination framework, which USCS is uniquely positioned to do. USCS has already rightly supported Palestine solidarity demonstrations in Scotland and distributed copies of the [Ukrainian letter of solidarity with Palestinian people](#). Efforts to place Ukrainian and Palestinian solidarity in competition with each other should be fiercely resisted. Demonstrations organised by Ukrainian communities in Scotland should be given whole-hearted support.

Looking further ahead, the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and various trade union conferences will provide more opportunities for USCS to win affiliations from trade unions, which – while representing only one aspect of its work – will boost its capacity to organise political and practical support for Ukrainians.

There is a positive sense of momentum building in USCS. It is virtually alone on the Scottish left in answering the call for internationalist solidarity with Ukraine. Its success or failure will reverberate for a long time to come.

CONTRIBUTOR

Connor Beaton is a republican socialist based in Dundee, where he works as a journalist. He was one of tens of thousands of young people drawn into politics by the 2014 independence referendum campaign. He is now the secretary of the Republican Socialist Platform and a local organiser for the Radical Independence Campaign.

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from:

<https://heckle.scot/2024/02/ukrainians-havent-been-forgotten/>

Main photo: USCS activists supporting Ukrainians in Glasgow's George Square on the 2nd anniversary of the Russian invasion 24 Feb 2024 (Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot)

Other photos: Connor Beaton for Heckle.scot

Scottish Kurds protest against Erdoğan invitation

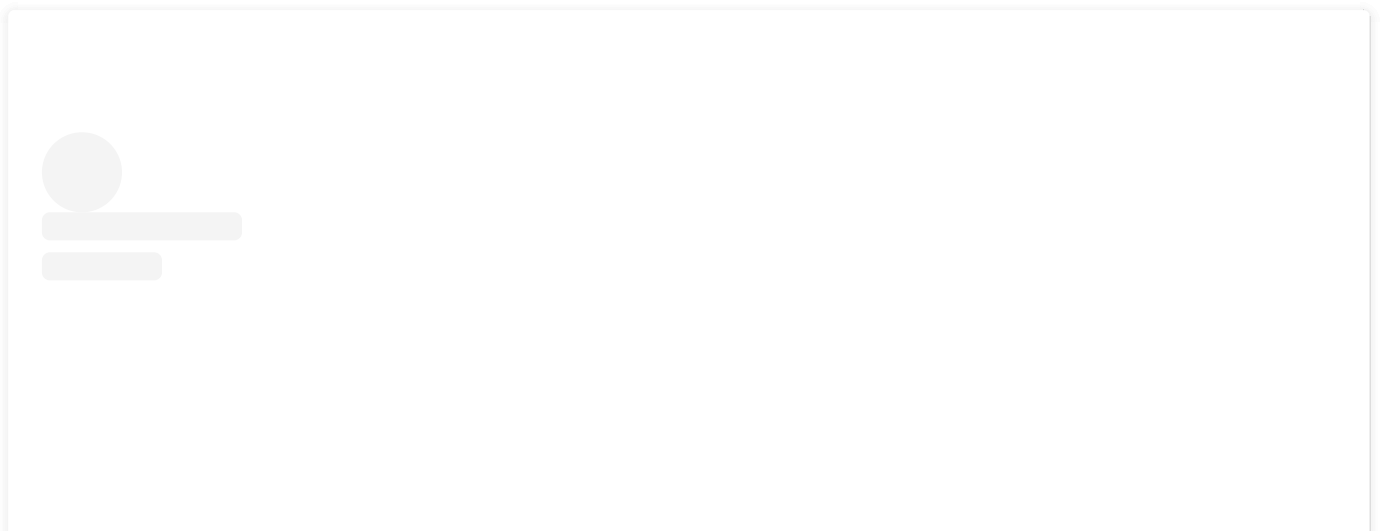
Kurds in Scotland and their supporters have protested at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh against any invitation to Turkish state President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to visit Scotland, reports Mike Picken for ecosocialist.scot.

The apparent invitation arose after Scottish First Minister, and leader of the governing Scottish National Party (SNP), Humza Yousaf met briefly with the Turkish state President while they were both in Dubai in December 2023 for the COP28 summit. Kurds are angry that Erdoğan is using the Gaza crisis to launch military attacks on Kurdish populations inside both the Syrian and Iraqi state and continue his persecution and murderous policies towards the 10 million Kurds inside the Turkish state. In the Kurdish-led liberated region of Rojava in neighbouring Syria, Erdoğan has [committed exactly the same sort of brutal bombing and attacks on civilian infrastructure](#) that he accuses Israel of in Gaza.

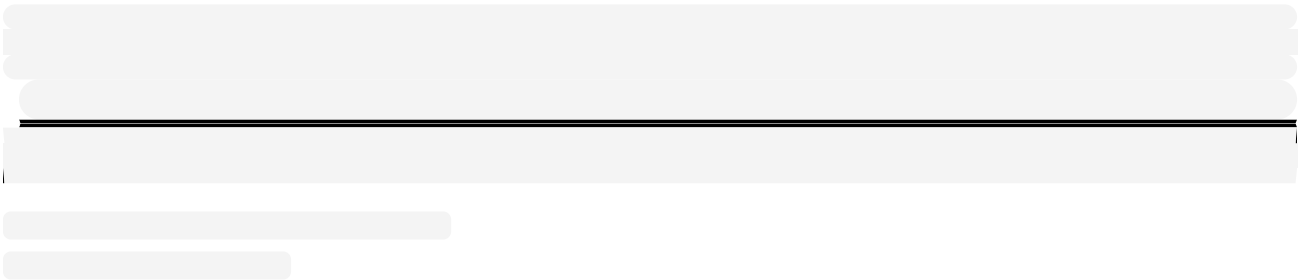


Damage caused by Turkish air attacks on civilian electricity infrastructure in Suwaydiyah North & East Syria. Photo: Rojava Information Center

So when news that Yousaf had invited Erdoğan to Scotland came out in the media in January 2024, Kurdish and solidarity organisations such as [Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan](#), alongside trade unionists Mike Arnott of the Scottish TUC and Stephen Smellie of UNISON Scotland, moved swiftly to condemn the invitation by issuing a public letter of protest. The Kurdish community in Scotland organised a demonstration at the Scottish Parliament on 25 January to demand the SNP refuse to invite Erdoğan and instead condemn his regime's murderous policy against the Kurds. The protestor's views were recorded by progressive media outlet The Skotia on Instagram (video below) and the open letter of protest received [wide media coverage](#).



[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Media for a better Scotland. (@theskotia)

Prominent Glasgow SNP councillor Roza Salih, herself a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan, had previously drawn attention to the matter in a post in December on Twitter/X in December, covered by The National daily newspaper:

“Humza being friendly and laughing with Erdogan is an offence to the Kurdish people”

Roza Salih, Scotland’s first refugee councillor, has

criticised Humza Yousaf for shaking hands with the Turkish president <https://t.co/XHu2iH28P0>

– The National (@ScotNational) [December 2, 2023](#)

International Movement demands release of Öcalan on 25th Anniversary of his incarceration

Meanwhile the Kurdish movement internationally is organising a global mobilisation to demand the release of Kurdish political leader, **Abdullah Öcalan**, with demonstrations across Europe up to the **25th Anniversary** of his unjust imprisonment and solitary confinement by the Turkish state. An Internationalist Long March is poised to spotlight this anniversary, beginning in Basel-Switzerland on 10 February, and will include key events such as a conference in Strasbourg on 15 February and a pan-European demonstration in Cologne and Düsseldorf, Germany, on 17 February. SNP Westminster Member of Parliament, Tommy Sheppard, recently met with Öcalan's lawyers at the Council of Europe meeting and has written to UK government foreign secretary to call on him to take up Öcalan's incarceration by the Turkish government and demand his release (text below).



Text of Open Letter by Kurdish solidarity organisations and

individuals on the invitation of Turkish president Erdoğan to Scotland

STATEMENT:

We, the undersigned, condemn the invitation that the First Minister of Scotland, Humza Yousaf, has made to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Turkish state's record on human rights abuses is well documented, both internally and externally. Women, ethnic minorities and migrants bear the brunt of its oppressive policies. In particular, the Turkish state continues a policy against the Kurdish people that seeks to suppress basic human rights and political autonomy through military force, legal repression, and assimilationist policies.

Erdogan's party destroys civilian infrastructure beyond Turkey's own borders for political leverage and to disempower an already economically disadvantaged population in Syria and Iraq. Yousaf's response to journalists was dismissive when challenged on this. We condemn the cooperation between Erdogan and any segment of the British state. The First Minister's response to press questioning whether the invitation was "a good idea considering his treatment of the Kurds" was that "as a NATO ally", it was a legitimate invitation "if he was visiting the UK". This is hypocritical: The SNP positions itself as distinct from Westminster and with a more discerning eye towards human rights abuses and regional autonomy.

While Erdogan has been vocally supportive of Palestinians, 40% of oil imports to Israel come via Turkey, and the two governments have a long term and high value arms industry relationship that has been ongoing throughout the periods of intensification in Israeli attacks over the last decade.

Erdogan does to the Kurds everything that he accuses Netanyahu of doing to the Palestinian people. Both Israel and Turkey have been crafting a Middle East where business and trade with western countries are more valuable than justice or freedom. The power to define terrorism and the legitimate use of violence are now highly developed tools to repress even the most basic self-determination of peoples.

From January 13th – 16th 2024, Turkish military forces carried out 224 ground and air strikes in north-eastern Syria, targeting agricultural and energy infrastructure such as oil fields. In nine locations, electric power stations were struck, which led to power outages and water supply issues that are currently affecting millions of people. This type of attack is a frequent but under reported reality and Erdogan is exploiting this moment when the world media is rightfully watching Gaza. The targeting of vital infrastructure is itself a war crime and these attacks are also an unprovoked act of aggression.

BAE Systems, Thales, Leonardo and other weapons manufacturing companies that have factories in Scotland supply both Israel and Turkey. In 2019, white phosphorous – banned for use as an incendiary chemical weapon – was reported to have been used by the Turkish military in north-eastern Syria. An investigation at the time showed 70 British export licenses for phosphorous.

Domestically in Turkey, the political repression of the left-wing parliamentary party HDP has led to more than five thousand of its members being arrested, the stripping of MPs' parliamentary immunity and their imprisonment, and widespread implementation of the "trustee" system by Erdogan's party that forcibly removed all elected HDP mayors from office and replaced them with government-appointed officials. This has disproportionately affected the Kurdish people in Turkey, where attempts at democratic expression are crushed, and more than eight thousand Kurdish political prisoners are

languishing in Turkish prisons. Kurdish language musicians, teachers and campaigners are often met with criminalisation – the Kurdish language is unrecognised by the Turkish parliament despite being the second most spoken language in the country, and language rights are linked to terrorism as a method of delegitimisation.

The UK government and the European Union countries have shrewdly wedded themselves to facilitating Erdogan's AKP government in exchange for the policing of Europe's land and sea borders and its imprisonment of displaced peoples subject to these "push-backs".

As residents of Scotland and members of human rights organisations, we request that the First Minister and the SNP condemn Erdogan and the AK Party for their actions. The targeting of civilian infrastructure and use of chemical weapons are war crimes, regardless of whether the state that does so is a NATO member.

We request Mr Yousaf's support in condemning these attacks on north-east Syria. We also ask him to assess the human rights abuses that the Kurdish peoples are subject to within the state borders of Turkey and that he supports the struggle for the freedom of political prisoners in Turkey.

We are in a moment that requires brave leadership on myriad human rights abuses, the repression of the self-determination of peoples and the destruction of the earth, happening across the globe. We implore the First Minister and Scottish government, particularly in this moment, to resist shallow alliances that fail to look at the geo-political situation holistically. The moment demands an uncompromising acknowledgement of the colonial legacies of the current genocidal treatment of the Palestinian and Kurdish peoples.

We ask Mr Yousaf to meet with the Kurdish communities in Scotland and campaigners to discuss this issue. We believe

that Scotland can do better and we would like to talk about how.

LIST OF SIGNATURES

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan

Kurdish Community Scotland

Zagros Community Scotland

Women's Rights Delegation from Scotland to North and East Syria, May 2023

International Human Rights Delegation on political prisoners in Turkey, December 2023

Edinburgh University Justice for Palestine Society

Mike Arnott, President of Scottish Trades Union Congress

Stephen Smellie, Depute Convenor UNISON Scotland

International Solidarity Movement (ISM) – Scotland

Text of Letter from SNP Westminster MP Tommy Sheppard to UK government foreign secretary David Cameron

TOMMY SHEPPARD MP



The Rt Hon Lord David Cameron

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

King Charles Street

London

SW1A 2AH

26th January 2024

Dear David

I am writing on behalf of several constituents to ask you to make representations to the Turkish Government in the case of Abdullah Ocalan.

You will know that Ocalan is regarded by millions of Kurds throughout the world as their leader and he is key to achieving a permanent and peaceful solution which respects the rights of the Kurds in Turkey and neighbouring countries.

He has been held in solitary confinement on the island prison of Imrali for almost 25 years. This is contrary to several judgements of European Court of Human Rights which have found the manner of his detention to be in violation of the statutes to prohibit torture.

As a UK member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I met with Mr Ocalan's lawyers earlier this week. They tell me that he has been denied any communication with the outside world and any visits from his legal team for almost three years now.

This case does great damage to Turkey's reputation and is an egregious breach of international human rights law. It is also a running sore and an insult to the many thousands of Kurdish people who have made this country their home.

I would ask you to take up this case with the Turkish authorities, demanding that Mr Ocalan be allowed access to his lawyers, that his isolation end, and that after a quarter of a century in solitary confinement, his case is reviewed, and plans made to end his incarceration.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Tommy Sheppard

Member of Parliament for Edinburgh East

Gaza: Support the New Hetherington Occupation at Glasgow University

*Students have occupied a building at Glasgow University to demand divestment from arms industries in the light of Israel's genocidal war in Gaza. Jennifer Debs reports for **Heckle** – online journal of the Republican Socialist Platform.*

Almost thirteen years have passed since Glasgow University's Hetherington House was last alive with student protest, but as of Monday 22nd January, that long dry spell has come to an end.

Once again, the windows of the building are brightened by flags and protest signs, and once more the halls are filled with political chatter and radical demands. Nearby, university security guards hover uneasily, keeping an eye on the front door and everyone that comes and goes. Looking at the scene, you might [think it was 2011 again](#).

But this is a new generation of student activists, even if the causes they fight for, like that of Gaza, were also upheld by a previous generation. The new occupiers are part of the Glasgow Against Arms and Fossil Fuels (GAAF) group, and they have taken over Hetherington House with the demand that the University of Glasgow divests from its investments in the arms industry.



Credit: [@gaafmovement on Instagram](#)

Inflamed by the brutal invasion of Gaza, the latest chapter in Israel's campaign of genocide against the Palestinian people, GAAF are taking action to pressure university management into taking a decision that would have a concrete impact on the funding of murder in the Middle East. GAAF argue that the university has blood on its hands, and that it profits by the shedding of that blood – something that must be stopped as soon as possible.

The occupation is aiming to put specific pressure on the university's finance committee, ahead of its next meeting in February, to make a decision in favour of divestment. GAAF has reason to believe its goal is feasible, given that Glasgow University previously made commitments to [divest from fossil fuels in 2014](#) after a successful campaign by student activists.

Of course, any commitment the university makes will be one that it must be held to, and that will doubtless be a part of GAAF's work should they win the current struggle. The university cannot be allowed to kick this issue into the long grass, not when so much is at stake in Palestine, Yemen, and

other sites of imperialist slaughter in the world today.



Credit: GAAF

For now, the occupation is focused on its first goal of winning a commitment to divestment, and on keeping itself running. Yesterday, Wednesday 24th January, a solidarity demonstration of students and supporters rallied outside Hetherington House before marching to the main building of the university. There were speeches about the goals of the campaign and the necessity of arms divestment, and the crowd made plenty of noise to let the university management know they aren't going anywhere.

This is only the beginning. GAAF intend to keep the occupation going until they win their goal, and they naturally need as much support as possible. With this action, these brave students are striking a blow at the imperialist war machine, and lending a hand to the people of Palestine in their hour of need. Every socialist in Scotland should support this

occupation.



Credit: GAAF

If you live nearby, go along to 11 University Gardens, have a chat with the students guarding the door, bring them some snacks and fruit, and let them know they are not alone. Occupations always need food and supplies, so find out what they need, and help them get it if you have some cash to spare. If GAAF call a demonstration, get along and show your support. The university and the broader public must know that these occupiers are backed up by a great well of support from the working class.

If you live elsewhere, why not think of organising a solidarity action through your trade union branch, your student union, your tenants' union, or your group of friends? And if the university management attempt to punish the occupiers with disciplinary action like suspension or expulsion, then we as a movement must help GAAF resist and

overturn any such decisions. Any victimisation of the occupiers must be confronted with a firm response: nobody left behind!

When the original Hetherington occupation took on university management all those years ago, they had a network of student groups and anti-austerity collectives at their side, supporting them and taking action in Glasgow and further afield. If the new Free Hetherington is to survive – and not just survive, claim a victory too – then it cannot be a single event. It must be answered in all the rich variety of action and expression the student and workers' movement is capable of.

There are many more institutions that fund genocide in Palestine, and this cannot be allowed to continue. But take heart – today we are seeing a new era of student militancy, and hopefully there will be many more occupations to come, not just in Glasgow, but also Dundee, Paisley, Stirling, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The arms economy needs a good beating. Let the second Free Hetherington be a kick in the teeth, but not the last!

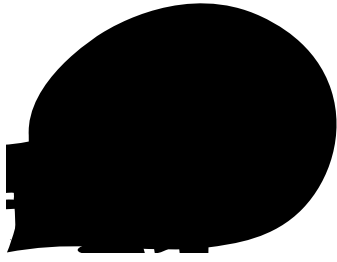
All together – defend and extend the Free Hetherington!

Books not bombs!

No profit from blood!

You can keep informed about GAAF and the occupation on [their Instagram page](#). The occupation is located at [11 University Gardens, Glasgow G12 8QH](#).

Originally published on Heckle:
<https://heckle.scot/2024/01/support-the-new-hetherington-occupation/>



To join the Republican Socialist Platform,
visit: <https://join.republicansocialists.scot/>



**Republican
Socialists**

**Ukraine's Fight is Our Fight
– Seminar in Edinburgh
Saturday 3rd February 1pm-5pm**

<https://bit.ly/USCScot24>

UKRAINE'S FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT

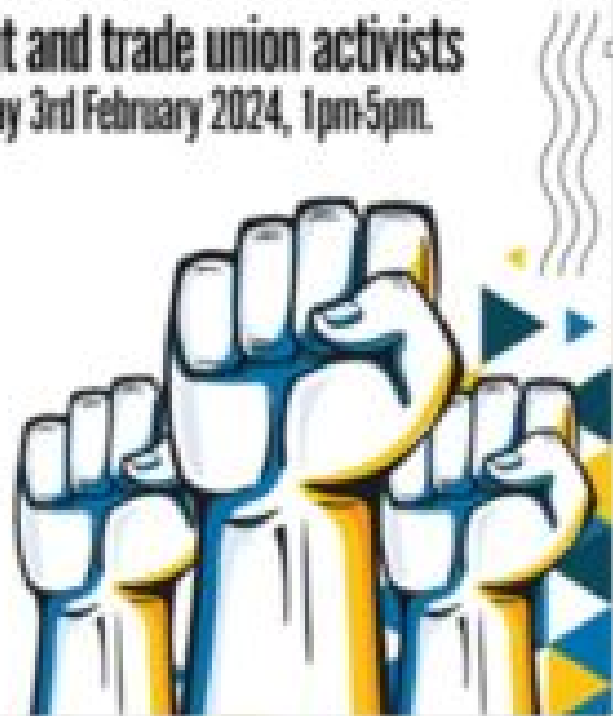
Perspectives from social movement and trade union activists
Edinburgh's Augustine United Church, Saturday 3rd February 2024, 1pm-5pm.

Free seminar with guest speakers including:

- Tommy Sheppard MP & Katy Clark MSP
- Chris Ford of Ukraine Solidarity Campaign
- Dr Taras Fedirko on the Ukrainian economy
- Iryna Zamuruleva on the environmental crisis
- Irish historian Conor Kostick on self-determination

More info & registration: bit.ly/USCScot24

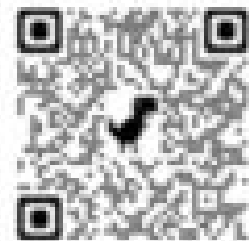
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The John Maclean Centenary Concert in Glasgow

Jim Aitken writing for [Culture Matters](#) reviews the Concert in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Scottish revolutionary marxist John Maclean attended by 2,000 people in Glasgow held on 19 January 2024 to launch the Celtic Connections festival of celtic and world music. See also [the review on Bella Caledonia by Alistair Davidson](#).

Celtic Connections put on a wonderful concert recently, in memory of Scotland's great Marxist revolutionary, John Maclean (1879 -1923). Glasgow's magnificent concert hall had the 2,000 strong audience deeply engaged with poetry readings and songs all commemorating a figure who entered Scottish folklore and legendary status after his untimely death, at the hands of a British state that had reduced him to appalling poverty and ill health.

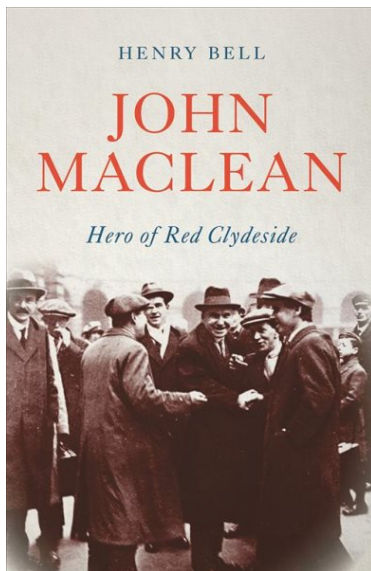
Maclean's parents were Highland clearance folk and came south to Glasgow to find work. Maclean became a primary school teacher in the city and was imprisoned several times for his anti-war activity in opposing the First World War which he said was –'a bayonet... with a worker at both ends.'. He was given a brutal stint in Peterhead jail of five years hard labour and maintained his food was poisoned while he was there.

Large crowds turned out to meet him when he returned to Glasgow after his release. He founded the Scottish Workers' Republican Party, Scotland's first pro-independence party. Maclean also supported Irish independence and would speak at meetings in Glasgow in support of Irish and Scottish

independence.

After his death his memory entered Scottish literature with Hugh MacDiarmid and Hamish Henderson, Edwin Morgan and others all writing poems and songs in his honour. In 1973 a pamphlet called *Homage to John Maclean* came out to commemorate him 50 years after his death. This pamphlet was published by the John Maclean Society which formed in 1968.

The centenary concert featured songs and poems from this pamphlet including Matt McGinn's *Dominee, Dominee*, which is the Scots word for teacher. MacDiarmid had several poems in the pamphlet and at the concert his poem *John Maclean* was beautifully read by Scotland's former Makar, Jackie Kay.



The evening was put together by Siobhan Miller and Henry Bell. While Siobhan is a singer who is well known in Scotland, Henry Bell is the author of possibly the finest biography written of Maclean which came out in 2018 called *John Maclean: Hero of Red Clydeside*, published by Pluto. Both should be congratulated for putting together such a fantastic evening with terrific performers.



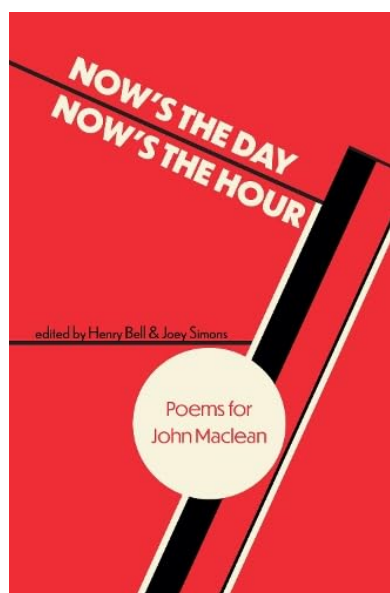
Everyone who performed on the night was superb. Karen Casey, an Irish singer, caught the mood when she said she felt she could say whatever she wanted to say to such an eager audience. Karine Polwart, Karen and Siobhan came together to sing *Mrs Barbour's Army*, written by Alistair Hulett, and recalling the struggle of Glasgow's women in refusing to pay increased rents as their husbands fought in WW1. Mary Barbour was a formidable woman and a comrade of Maclean's. A sculpture to her and her women comrades stands proudly outside Govan tube station.

Billy Bragg was well received but the best cheer of the night was for Dick Gaughan who has been singing and campaigning for socialism over decades in Scotland and beyond. He has performed at previous Celtic Connection events and the crowd seemed to give him such deserved applause precisely because he has been such a champion for socialism and internationalism over so many years. He told the crowd with pride that he was a Scottish Republican which went down well with them. He sang *The Red Flag* with Billy Bragg to its original tune of *The White Cockade* by Robert Burns. Eddi Reader sang Burns' *A Man's a Man for a' That* in her very distinctive way of singing Burns' songs. She has become by far the best singer of Burns' songs in recent times.

What was rather moving was to see and hear Maclean's

granddaughter, Frances Wilson, who came on stage to read out one of her grandfather's letters to her mother. That was a really special moment and she was clearly delighted to receive such applause and to realise that so many people still held her grandfather in such high esteem.

Maclean's speech from the dock was also read out in which he says '*I am not here, then, as the accused; I am here as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot.*' Such words are as relevant today as they were then.



Speaking to people after the concert, it was clear that many lamented the fact that such radical, internationalist politics is sorely lacking today. And after folk left the hall, they could have bought a copy of *Now's the Day, Now's the Hour: Poems for John Maclean*, published in late 2023 by Tapsalteerie. This book contains many of the poems and songs from the 1973 pamphlet along with new material from another generation of Scottish writers. The book is edited by Henry Bell and Joey Simons and was first launched in *The Griffin* bar near where Maclean would speak his anti-war, socialist and internationalist message.

The concert was very much a Scottish night but also an internationalist one. At the end of the concert both *The Internationale* and Henderson's *The Freedom-Come-All-Ye* were

sung by all the performers and by many in the audience.

John Maclean has been dead for one hundred years but his spirit clearly lives on in poetry and in song. If only his politics could live on too!

Originally published by Culture Matters:
<https://www.culturematters.org.uk/index.php/arts/music/item/4446-the-john-maclean-centenary-concert>

About Culture Matters

(from the Culture Matters website)

We (Culture Matters) are a group of writers, artists and activists [from England and beyond] who think that culture matters.

Culture matters. *The arts (films, plays, paintings, music etc.) and culture generally (sport, religion, the media, eating and drinking etc.) can be wholesome and liberating. They please the senses, stimulate the mind, arouse emotions, and feed the soul. But class-based divisions in society, founded on unequal property ownership, constrain and prevent our enjoyment of cultural activities, which are essential to enjoy life and be fully human.*

Culture matters. *Cultural activities and experiences can promote awareness, arouse indignation, inspire creativity and imagination, create a sense of equality, community and social justice. They can help us in the 'mental fight' to build Blake's new Jerusalem, a more democratic, equal, socialist society – not only in England but across the globe.*

*So the **Culture Matters** website aims to publish relevant creative material (poems, images, music etc,) and critical material (reviews, articles, interviews etc.) We also run*

Bread and Roses Arts Awards, publish books and pamphlets, and work with the labour movement through workshops and campaigns on culture issues.

Donations

We rely on donations to keep going, so if you have enjoyed visiting the Culture Matters website, you can support our mission by using the button below.



John Maclean's Legacy – 100 Years On. Talk by Henry Bell to a Scottish Socialist Party Event

On 24 January 2024 at Townhead Village Hall, Glasgow, **Henry Bell**, author of the biography "*John Maclean – Hero of Red Clydeside*", gave the Jim McVicar Memorial Lecture for the Scottish Socialist Party. Bell examines some of the life, times and core principles that the revolutionary marxist John Maclean represented. He asks if these still relate to the world today – a century after Maclean's tragic and untimely death.

Independence Live recorded the lecture and will be making it available on YouTube below

Find author Henry Bell's website <https://henryjimbell.com/>

John Maclean – Hero of Red Clydeside is available from Pluto Press: <https://plutobooks.com>
<https://www.plutobooks.com/9780745338385/john-maclean/>

Find more info and publications etc from Scottish Socialist Party: <https://scottishsocialistparty.org/>

The **Jim McVicar Memorial Lecture** is an annual event organised by the Scottish Socialist Party to commemorate the life of Jim McVicar, founder member of the Scottish Socialist Party and its Treasurer at the time of his untimely death in 2020 (Obituary by Scottish Fourth Internationalists here: <https://socialistresistance.org/jim-mcvicar-1958-2020/21311>)

Rising Clyde Episode 17: COP28 Again – Historic breakthrough or corporate capture?

The latest issue of Rising Clyde, the Scottish climate justice show hosted by Iain Bruce is now available on YouTube thanks to Independence Live.

The Show asks what really happened at the recent UN climate talks in Dubai and what we should do about it, including a look at what role the Scottish government is playing in the process, with two activist experts who were there: Scott Kirby in Edinburgh, from the UK Youth Climate Coalition and in London, Dorothy Guerrero of Global Justice Now.

Rising Clyde Show – the Scottish climate justice show.

Rising Clyde examines the key issues and the big challenges facing the struggle for climate justice in Scotland. After the surprisingly big and hugely diverse protests in Glasgow during COP26, how can the breadth of that movement be held together, how can we build on its energy?



- After the suspension of Cambo, can the movement stop any more new oil or gas projects in the North Sea?
- How can we wind down the whole oil and gas industry in Scotland in this decade, while ensuring no layoffs and decent new jobs for all those affected?
- Was the Scotwind auction a major step on the transition to renewable energy, or a sell-off of the family silver?
- How can an independent Scotland tolerate one of the most unequal and damaging systems of land ownership on the planet

For half an hour on the first Monday of each month, we'll be talking to activists and experts about these and many other issues that will shape this country's future.

The host of Rising Clyde, **Iain Bruce**, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a

daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.

Playlist... To see previous episodes, start the video below, then click on the top right icon.

<https://youtu.be/0qK7olrAtvk?list=PLxc3IWpJ3vJZLQg9hFjnGWvvfSHdIrnXG>

Women's Delegation from Scotland to Rojava

On Christmas eve as bombs dropped on Palestine, Turkey began a fresh assault on Rojava, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, destroying critical infrastructure, like power plants and grain storage, and killing civilians. Like Palestine, the ongoing struggle in Rojava is a decades (if not centuries) long fight for collective liberation and self-determination. The ongoing revolution has established a region-wide system of grassroots democracy led by women's liberation. Such liberatory realities will always be a threat to established power structures and the most recent escalation is no coincidence. Turkey's president Tayip Erdogan has already made two full ground invasions of Rojava, annexing the Afrin region in 2018, and Serekaniye in 2019. Now, he undertakes another aggression knowing that attention is elsewhere. As the events of the past few months have made visible the necessity and reality of anti-imperial struggle for so many, a group of women from Scotland who visited Rojava in 2023 reflect on the lessons from what they witnessed there for anyone interested in anti-colonial movements.

Why did we go?

We travelled to Rojava in spring 2023, where we met with women's groups under the umbrella of the confederal women's organisation, [Kongra Star](#). We are all organisers or activists at home, with diverse backgrounds both culturally and in struggle: such as migrant justice, feminism, anti-capitalism and campaigns against the arms trade. In different ways, we could all see ourselves reflected in the struggle and the achievements of the Rojava revolution. We all have questions, now more than ever, about how we can change the world we live in for the better, and we felt we could learn a lot from the political process there.

The Kurdistan Freedom Movement has a tradition of grassroots organising and challenging oppressive power structures instead of recreating them. The revolution has followed this philosophy, not basing the organisation of society on nationalist or ethnic lines. Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, Ezidis and all the people of the region self-organise and develop their own strengths, coming together in structures that treats diversity as strength. Together they have created the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and are transforming their society at all levels. The philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan, with its proposals for Democratic Confederalism (the organisation of society through democratic self-organisation not state institutions) and women's liberation, is the beating heart of a revolution which has been going on for over a decade. Kurdish women had been organising for many years when opportunity for revolution arose in 2012, at which point the people of Rojava, because of this committed long-term work of organising and education, were prepared to build up a society based on women's freedom and gender liberation, pluralism, ecology, grassroots democracy and self-governance.



The special cemetery in Kobane for those who were lost in the war.
Photo Credit: Jennifer Clapham

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On our first day, we visited a Jineoloji Academy, Washokani refugee camp and Jinwar village. We learnt about the work and research of Jineoloji in the first meeting: it is a science of life, society, and the creation of a new world based on women's and ecological liberation. The aim of their analysis of oppression is to solve social problems, rather than merely theorise about them. In our discussion, we compared the Western rhetoric of "rights" to the concept of "freedom" in Rojava. In our organising in Scotland, we often come across tendencies to rely on governance structure to grant rights and solutions – e.g. by lobbying for laws or asking for grants. Freedom, as the women from the Jineoloji Academy explained to us, consists in autonomy and self-empowerment. It needs to be built from the ground up and cannot be granted from above. This encouragement of the flourishing of autonomy through collective action showed us how Rojava is a microcosm of all the world's social problems and provides inspiration for women's struggles in Scotland as well.



Arriving at Washokani refugee camp. Photo
Credit: Jennifer Clapham

When we visited the Washokani refugee camp, we spoke to the women's group there

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The women-led aspect of the revolution goes beyond autonomous women's organising and encompasses the liberation of children and families as well. At Jinwar Women's Village, which started 6 years ago as one of the only women's villages in the world, we learnt about how they also organise a regular children's assembly. Its purpose is to extend democracy to the youth by encouraging them to self-organise, solve their problems, and share skills, ideas and culture. The village also embraces herbal medicine and deepens the connection to the land through growing their own food; a testament to the administration's aims of caring for the environment and sustainability. After the discussion, we shared a delicious meal made with local nutritious ingredients, and it was easy to agree with the following message, voiced earlier in the day by one of the village's inhabitants: "Women are the heart and driving force of democracy – when we come together and feel together, no one can defeat us".



Jinwar women's village. Photo
Credit: Jennifer Clapham

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**Messages to
Scotland and
learnings for us**

It was clear how
much we were
learning and
what we were

getting out of the experience. We had to ask ourselves what they felt they were getting out of giving us so much time from their busy lives. Usually, the answer came in the form of a



Meeting with the women who run domestic violence resolution centres. Photo Credit: own revolution Jennifer Clapham

at home. We shuffled awkwardly, asking if there were key messages, they wanted us to bring out to the world, while we work on that one.

Spreading the word about the revolution, and the Turkish state's attempts to destroy it is a start. Rojava is a living example of how we can organise ourselves and society differently. It is direct democracy, with women involved at every level of organising, a new society with communal living at the centre. It is messy, imperfect, and still not complete – but it shows it is possible. At a time when it is hard to find any light, we must hold onto and know that a better world is possible.

The women of North and East Syria are not asking for anyone's help and are more than capable of changing their own world. Still, we were reminded many times of the UK's responsibility in the arms trade that leads to the bombs dropping on Rojava, and the complicity of global powers in the Turkish state's attacks on infrastructure. The neighbourhood communes and assemblies there lamented the shortages of water and resources, which are problems with material roots in the UK. For example, BAE systems – who have multiple sites in Scotland – are helping Turkey develop their own aircraft.

In addition to drone strikes and shelling of infrastructure, Turkey also targets political organisers, particularly women. We have already looked on, horrified, as Yusra Darwish, a friend who welcomed us with tea and discussed neighbourhood organising with us, was killed in a Turkish drone strike in June. Now we are watching as power stations, water supplies, hospitals and even the region's only oxygen factory, are targeted in an effort to break the will and the ability to survive of the people of the region. The fabric of everything that made such an impression on us, that has become an inspiration for radicals all over the world, is under attack.

Call to Action

States that destroy infrastructure, kill civilians and deny people the right self-determination are a threat to democracy and liberation everywhere. And if we believe in a fairer, just world for everyone, then we need to stand up and fight against it. We can start by breaking the silence. Share your knowledge of these attacks with your friends, discuss it with your family, and post about it online. Follow news sites like the ones detailed below.

You can also donate to Heyva Sor a Kurd (Kurdish Red Crescent) who are on the ground in North-East Syria providing vital humanitarian and medical assistance (details at end).

Lastly, join, support, or set up a local solidarity group, such as the Kurdistan Solidarity Network or Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan.

Stay up to date on events in the region:

ANF News (<https://anfenglishmobile.com/>) or Medya News (<https://medyanews.net/>). As well as groups such as the Rojava Information Centre (Twitter: @RojavaIC) or Riseup 4 Rojava (<https://riseup4rojava.org/>).

Solidarity networks:

<https://kurdistansolidarity.net>

[Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan | Facebook](#) Look on Facebook: "ScottishSolidaritywithKurdistan"

DONATE TO HEYVA SOR HERE

Bank account

Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê e. V.

Kreissparkasse Köln

IBAN: DE49 3705 0299 0004 0104 81

BIC/SWIFT: COKSDE33XXX

Reference: Rojava

PayPal: [paypal.me/heyvasorakurdistan](https://www.paypal.me/heyvasorakurdistan)

Contact and further information: www.heyvasor.com

E-Mail: heyvasor@web.de

Phone: +49 (0) 2241 975 25 83

Instagram: heyvasor

Twitter: @Heyva__Sor

Facebook: Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê e.V.

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Main Picture: Arin Mirkan square in liberated Kobane, pivotal

in the fight against ISIS. Photo Credit: Jennifer Clapham



Originally published by [Bella Caledonia](#), a Scottish-based online magazine [combining political and cultural commentary](#). You can support Bella Caledonia and Scottish independent media by donating here: <https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/donate>

**#NowWeRise – 9 Dec Day of Action on Climate Justice
12.30pm Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh**

From the [Climate Justice Coalition](#):

Temperatures are rising. Corporate profits are rising. Now we're rising.

The hottest summer on record. Politicians backtracking on climate commitments. Continued corporate profiteering fuelling the climate and cost of living crises. **It's time for us to take action.**

As world leaders gather for the UN's climate negotiations at COP28, a climate summit presided over by an oil executive, **we're coming together on 9 December to demand climate justice.**

COP28 Day of Action for Scotland

Start: Saturday, December 09, 2023 • 12:30 PM

**Outside Scottish Parliament • Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP**

Host Contact Info: info@climatefringe.org

**JOIN US
COP28 Global Day of Action
for Climate Justice**

**SCOTLAND
UNITED FOR ACTION**

**NOW
WE RISE**

12:30pm 9 December
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh



**Temperatures and waters are rising.
Injustices are rising.
We are rising!**

At a time when the UK Government is rolling back on climate and nature policies, and the Scottish Government has delayed its vital new climate plan (which sets out the steps to achieve legally set targets), it's more important than ever for us to come together to show people in Scotland want the

urgent and fair climate action that they've been demanding for decades.

[Join us at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on 9th December](#) to send a strong message to decision makers that we are united for action, to tackle the climate and nature crises, secure sustainable jobs, a fairer, greener, healthier society for everyone in Scotland and justice for those impacted by the climate crisis.

There will be inspiring speakers, the opportunity to send a message to the Scottish party leaders with your wishes for action on climate and nature in 2024, kids activities, and more!

[Join Us! – Click on this Link](#)

NOW WE RISE: JOIN US TO SHOW SCOTLAND IS UNITED FOR ACTION

In 2021 over 100,000 people took to the streets of Glasgow to tell world leaders at the COP26 climate talks they wanted action on the climate and nature emergencies.

Since then, despite record breaking temperatures and increasingly devastating climate impacts, we have seen a lack of progress on action to reduce emissions, protect nature, or make the biggest polluters pay for the damage they are causing.

Temperature and Waters are Rising

2023 will be the hottest year on record. As the world heats up, extreme weather events on every continent – from floods in Brechin to wildfires in Greece – are causing mass devastation, loss of life and livelihoods in communities around the world. The evidence is right in front of our eyes: our climate is

breaking down. And, if we're to have any hope of a liveable planet and tackling the climate crisis, we must deliver a just transition and dramatically and immediately reduce the use of fossil fuels.

Injustices are Rising

The cost of living crisis and climate crisis are driven by our reliance on dirty fossil fuels, and by the excessive emissions of the richest people. The climate crisis disproportionately affects ordinary people and communities in the global south, while those most responsible profit. In 2022, the five biggest oil and gas companies made record profits of over £150 billion. As corporations make billions, we struggle to make ends meet. Energy prices in Britain are still double what they were two years ago, soaring above wages and benefit levels and many thousands will be cold in their homes this winter.

Now We Rise!

People in Scotland from all walks of life are coming together to say we know the solutions, and we want our leaders to take robust and urgent action to implement these. We can replace the destructive fossil fuel economy with a real alternative. We can take advantage of cheap renewable energy, insulate homes, reduce energy waste and implement accessible and affordable public transport. We can create an economy that meets the needs of communities, creates secure and sustainable jobs and places the wellbeing of both people and nature at its centre.

We will stand with communities in the Global South who are suffering from the climate crisis which they did not create, and which does the greatest damage to countries already burdened by unjust debt. Rich nations must provide urgent climate finance and grants for loss and damage.

At a time when the UK Government is rolling back on climate and nature policies, and the Scottish Government will soon be publishing its new climate plan, it's more important than ever for us to come together to show people in Scotland want action.

[Join us at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on 9th December](#) to send a strong message to decision makers that we are united for action, to tackle the climate and nature crises, secure sustainable jobs, a fairer, greener, healthier society for everyone in Scotland and justice for those impacted by the climate crisis.

For other actions taking place across the UK check this [interactive action map](#) by the Climate Justice Coalition.

Source: <https://climatefringe.org/cop28-scotland/>