



# WATER FOR ROJAVA

2022 DELEGATION REPORT



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# WATER FOR ROJAVA COMMITTEE

## INTRODUCTION

The Water for Rojava Committee went on a delegation to North and East Syria (NES, also known as Rojava) during the month of October, 2022. The delegation included members of [Siemenpuu](#) (Finland), [Solidarity Economy Association](#) (UK), [Roots for Change](#) (Switzerland), and a local friend for translation and logistical support. The main purpose of the delegation was to further develop relationships with relevant people and structures in NES, especially the women's economic structures (Aboriya Jin) and Water Departments (Desteya Avê), as well as to visit projects the [Water for Rojava Campaign](#) has supported; scope potential for future projects we might support, and other structures we might work with. We also aimed to facilitate, or understand the need or desire for training and education on relevant topics.

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## Week One: Arriving

On 4 October 2022, the day of our arrival in South Kurdistan – the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) – [Jineoloji member Nagihan Akarsel is shot](#) 11 times in front of her home while on her way to the library in Sulimaniyah, less than 50 miles away from us, where she has been working for the establishment of a Jineology Academy and a Library of Kurdistan Women. This is of huge significance. It continues a pattern that has been going on for some years of targeted political assassinations, and killings of Kurdish women activists in particular. Only one week earlier, on September 27, a [Turkish drone strike](#) killed Zeyneb Sarokhan and Yilmaz Şero, Co-chairs of the Justice Bureau in the Cizîrê region of NES. Zeyneb Serokhan was also an active and committed member of the women's movement Kongra Star, one of the organisations we are to meet during our delegation. Sadly, such attacks are only to continue during our time in Kurdistan.

We need to wait in Duhok as our permissions to enter Rojava from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) haven't arrived. We spend the time preparing for the weeks ahead and seeing some of the local area.

In Duhok there is a large dam with a Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) flag emblazoned across it, at the base of which we find some tourist trap resort style restaurants, including one with a 'traditional culture' theme, where even the trees are made of plastic, all next to ancient remains of an actual pre-Islamic Zoroastrian temple, which is not really mentioned in the plastic folklore in the valley below. This serves as an illustration of the many differences between the capitalist nation statist project being constructed in Başûr (South Kurdistan / North Iraq) and the pluralist social ecology paradigm of [Rojava](#) (North and East Syria).

After some hours of waiting on the KRI side, we cross finally to Rojava and drive straight to [Qamishlo](#), arriving at the [Kongra Star](#) office just as the ['Conversations with Gamechangers'](#) webinar is beginning. This event, organised by Solidarity Economy Association, features Aboriya Jin, the women's economy structure of Kongra Star, which is the main women's co-operative development body in the region. Heval Gûlê speaks about the role and work of Aboriya Jin, their struggles and successes in building a co-operative and communal women's economy across North and East Syria.

We spend our first full day in Rojava getting to know our host family and orienting ourselves in the area we will mainly be staying. Our friend is like the prodigal son returning, despite having last visited only a few months early, and there is carousel of aunt, uncle and cousin delegations visiting the house. Each time we return to the house we find a new pile of shoes outside the front door, belonging to the visiting relatives.

## Week 2: Qamishlo, Derik and Girke Legê women's cooperatives and a meeting with Kêziyên Kesk, a young local ecology group

On Monday we visit the [Kongra Star](#) building in Qamishlo for a longer talk with Gûlê in the Aboriya Jin office. Gûlê is now our main contact with Aboriya Jin, as our previous contact stepped back for personal reasons before the delegation. We hear about how the work is going and make appointments for meetings with Aboriya Jin committees in Derik and Hasakah in the coming days. We also present a letter from the [International Co-operative Working Group](#) (ICWG) in the UK and send a translated version in Arabic.

We meet with the Aboriya Jin office in [Derik](#) the following day, Tuesday, and also get a chance to see some of their local projects, including a visit to cooperative farm project [Jîyan](#), supported by Water for Rojava.

There are six women working in the Aboriya Jin office, who each carry responsibilities for different projects and aspects of their work. In Derik they have three agriculture coops; a dairy coop of 7-8 women, who buy milk and then sell it as cheese and yogurt in the market; 10 tuck shops in 10 schools, run as a cooperative, with one woman running each canteen; [Xwaringeh Semalka](#), a restaurant at the border crossing with four-women workers from a nearby village who cook for the border workers, and a clothes shop inside the market at Newroz Camp for internally displaced people (IDPs).

The Jîyan (Life) project is very big now, and it's growing. The land of the project cov-



“Let’s communalise our earth, our water, our energy”.

Meeting Heval Gûlê, Aboriya Jin office in Qamishlo



**Jiyan - “Life” - women’s agricultural project in Dêrik supported by W4R.**

ers 400 hectares but they can’t use it all due to low capacity. There are currently two wells working, but now 11 villages are relying on the land and more access to water is needed. There’s a plan to bring two abandoned wells back into service to increase productivity. People of the 11 villages come to buy the produce of Jiyan, which is more affordable, and they can also use the waste product of the wheat for their animals after the harvest, which saves them money. There are financial issues for generators, tractors, wells. There’s no rain. The aim is to keep growing so the project can support double or triple the number of villages. Six families are living in the village of the project itself and also have free accommodation. This goes up during harvest times as some families also come to live and work in the village and then go back to their own village the rest of the time.

Unfortunately, the sũka jin (women’s market) in Dêrik that Solidarity Economy Association visited in 2018 had to close down due to poor building works as the roof is destroyed. Apparently the building only lasted a year! There are plans to rebuild it from scratch, but funds will be needed for this. Next door to the closed Sũka Jin is an equally closed women’s sewing cooperative workshop, whose building also needs serious renovation. The plan is to not only revive the sewing workshop, but to also create an office and a kindergarten project in the same building. When these plans are completed (funds also needed), there will be two women’s economy offices, a women’s market, a sewing coop and a kindergarten all in one row of buildings, which will certainly be great for the women’s economy in Dêrik.



**Closed women’s market in Dêrik**

On Wednesday we have no specific appointments, so decide to get a ride into Qamişlo and see who we can find to meet with. We manage to organise a meeting with [Civil Diplomacy](#), a fairly new structure whose role is to help build relationships between NES and people and movements around the world. They are can organise meetings with various organisational bodies in Rojava, and we make a big list of potential visits and meetings which they begin organising for us. Unfortunately, we won’t eventually have time to meet all of them, but we do manage to meet with a good range of different structures working in various fields.

A drone attack takes place in Derik on the road we were on the previous day while visiting the Jiyan project, [killing](#) a member of the Sotoro self protection forces of the Syriac Christian minority community. Because of the attack, a planned memorial event for [Hevrîn Xelef](#) is canceled due to security concerns. The brutal murder of the Kurdish woman activist and former Women’s Economy member on 12 October 2019 is a very significant event, and it is worth noting the frequency with which Turkey carries out attacks on important anniversary dates such as these.

Thursday and Friday are both quiet days for us, so we have an excellent long taştê (breakfast) and catch up on writing notes and planning meetings for the coming days, appointments for which are trickling in from the Civil Diplomacy Center. We hear of yet another drone attack in the north of Qamişlo city on Thursday.

On Saturday we decide to drop by for an unannounced visit at the local Şahedari (municipality) as well as the Komîn (commune). These are local structures which form the base of the stateless democratic system, where people



**W4R funded storage space at Jiyan (Life) women's economy project in Dêrik**

bring their issues, discuss problems and try to find solutions to problems together at the most local level possible. While the people working in the commune office are busy with a meeting and are only able to greet us, the Şahedari have time to sit with us and discuss a bit about their work, challenges and plans.

We also walk around [Girkê Legê](#) and [Rimelan](#). Girkê Legê is an old town, but Rimelan is like a gated city adjacent the old town, which was built by the Syrian Regime for oil workers and their families. Apparently workers live there for around 40 years during their working life and can save enough money to buy a house for their retirement. People in Girkê Legê itself seem resentful that Rimelan residents get 24/7 electricity, while theirs is only two hours in every four.

We also visit a Kongra Star women's co-operative shop called [Nûdem](#), and stock up on snacks.

Later, we have a meeting with three members of local grassroots ecology organisation [Kêziyên Kesk](#) (Green Braids, sometimes translated as 'Green Tress'). The organisation was born from protest action and criticism of the [AANES](#) after the municipality of [Till Koçer](#) built concrete statues of trees in 2020. Three friends wrote an open letter to the municipality, criticising and stating hope for a more ecological approach, which was then posted on social media. The administration sent a group to investigate and the concrete trees were removed, in collaboration with the Ecology Department of the AANES. From that experience they learned that it's not enough to criticise - the

work needs to be done. So they set up [Keziyen Kesk](#).

They decided to plant trees. They found out that in North and East Syria only 1.5 % of land is green, while the global average is 10-18%. They also reflected on the skyrocketing cancer rates in the region and the relationship between these issues. They calculated that they need to plant 17 times the number of trees that are already here. Their aim is now to plant 4 million trees. They established the first garden with help from University of Rojava, and their current project is to grow 2,000 tree saplings in 2,000 schools, to educate children while also reforesting the region. Not all schools have access to water, particularly good drinking water – the wells dried up, or something is broken. They complained to the Education Board, who promised to address the issue within 3 months. They also have a botanical laboratory in Rimelan. As they are organising ecological education and training in society, which falls within remit of recent funding, we give \$500 to Keziyen Kesk to organise ecological education in December.

Keziyen Kesk want to work with anyone willing to contribute to their goal, so they take a non partisan approach. They do door knocking and cooperate with the Autonomous Administration, but are also able to reach other actors like local companies, because of their position in society. They tell us how they convinced a plastic company to give them bags needed for tree planting for free, arguing that they are polluting their own region and therefore have a responsibility for it.

They tell us that 108 rivers and streams have disappeared because of actions of Turkey and climate change. "There is ecological war against us. The water is being cut off and without water nothing is possible."

We get so absorbed in our conversation with Keziyen Kesk we're almost late for an online meeting organised by [Emergency Committee for Rojavato](#) bring together unions in North America and NE Syria. It's attended by representatives of several different unions in each territory, but it's interesting to note the NES contingent have taken care to represent the diversity of the region, with Kurdish, Arab and Syriac representatives, and more than half of these are women, whereas the North American contingent are almost entirely white men.

## Week 3: Amude and Hasakah - water directorates and women's economy meetings; democratic religions and meetings with local ecology structures in Qamishlo

Sunday is our first day with a car. We've been trying to find a driver since arriving and have finally got one through a recommendation. The driver is great, he knows all the roads and is very chill.

We drive to [Amûde](#) for a meeting with the hevseroks (co-chairs) of both Amude and Qamishlo Canton Water Directorates. Amude is in an important position, being located only 90km from the important Alouk water station, which was feeding most of the region until it was attacked and subsequently occupied by Turkey's invasion of [Serekaniye](#) (whose Kurdish name means something like 'fountainhead') in October 2019. The water situation isn't as dire in Amude as it is in Hasakah, where a very serious problem is faced, but there are also a lot of issues in Qamishlo Canton, where Amude is located. We ask about the dropping water table. They inform us that water could previously be found at 160 metres below the surface, whereas now it is 194 metres, and dropping. There are several projects ready to implement but where



The hevseroks (co-chairs) of Hasakah Water Directorate.

"Everything for freedom" entrance to Tirbespî town on the road to Qamishlo



Viewing the work W4R supported at Amude Water Station

more funds are needed, such as one that will bring water to 82 villages with a budget of \$700,000.

“Please use your voice to reach other NGOs, the EU and other relevant organisations in relation to this issue. It has been 12 years since the start of the Rojava Revolution and we are trying to build ourselves up. We need support with all of this, especially and including the needs for infrastructure.”

The Water for Rojava Fund has supported one water project in Amude with around £13,000 for rehabilitation of a borehole. We’re unable to visit the borehole itself due to its proximity to the border and danger of shelling or shooting by Turkey, but we can visit the water pumping station and see the water flowing through from the borehole we sponsored. As of September, the borehole is providing water to 33,000 people in the surrounding town and villages at a rate of 15 hours per day, up from only 2 hours per day before the work was done.

We’re also taken to see another new borehole as an example, as well as a small village which has no water because it relies on grid power which is only for an hour or so per day. For their water supply they’d need power to pump for 3-5 hours a day, and so Water for Rojava has sponsored a generator to meet the water needs of two villages.

In the evening we stay at a guest house in Amude and have a night out at Kulturvan, an independent cultural centre set up by a local guy who returned from the diaspora in Europe in 2020. The place hosts music and cultural classes and activities, including a theatre, cinema and library, with music lessons, and yoga classes for children, as well as serving food and drinks.

The next day, Monday, we drive to [Hasakah](#). Our way is interrupted by an epic [sandstorm](#), making us late for our meeting with the Water Directorate in Hasakah at 10am. Water for Rojava has supported three projects in Hasakah, where the water crisis is most keenly felt, with boreholes and system upgrades.

As with all other meetings we begin by explaining a bit about the Water for Rojava campaign, and that the committee is formed by a number of different organisations, with the funds coming primarily from the grassroots, from people who have donated small and large amounts from all over the world, as well as support from foundations. They tell us, “We thought the support was coming from a donor, but now you explained the story and that each of you is part of a different organisation, we are very happy for this and that the voice of Rojava is reaching people.”

They tell us of an ambitious plan to transport water from Amude all the way to Hasakah, which will cost serious money, with a budget of around \$40 million. This makes the £150,000 we have raised so far as part of the Water for Rojava campaign feel suddenly very small indeed!

They also articulate again the need for the Alouk Water Station which is under control of Turkey and militias backed by Turkey. They want to demilitarise the Alouk water station and bring it under control of a neutral third party. Their suggestion for this is the International Red Cross (IRC), but they stress that this is just an example. We begin to discuss the possibility for an international campaign around this demand.

We also discuss the [interconnectedness between water and power](#) in the region, since power is increasingly needed to pump water from ever deeper levels and for



Sandstorm! On the road to Hasakah



deeper borehole drilling, while power also comes primarily from hydro. It is chicken and egg – power brings water while water brings power. “If we don’t have water from Turkey we don’t have electricity. If Turkey gives us water, we can provide water to the people, but also electricity.”

It’s interesting note that some of the women working at the Hasakah Water Directorate have decades of experience and were previously doing the same work under the Syrian Regime, so they bring a great deal of expertise. It’s a useful and productive meeting, but we are unfortunately unable to visit any of the sites due to security and sandstorms. We have to turn back on the road south from the city on our way to visit the first site – our driver informs us that ISIS sleeper cells are still active in the region, which is largely desert, and they are known to travel inside the sandstorms in particular as a form of cover.

We return to Hasakah the following day, Tuesday, for a meeting of the local branch of Aboriya Jin. Their office is responsible for women’s economy work in the Hasakah Canton, which covers [Sheddadi](#), [Til Temir](#), [Derbesiye](#) and [Hasakah](#) itself.

The women in the office tell us how they give education around the concept of co-operatives and training about the new system being built in Rojava, with the aim of bringing people together to start collective projects. They support coops with subsidised flour and mazot (unrefined petrol used for everything in the region from running cars to keeping warm to baking bread), and continue supporting coops after they have been founded with whatever is needed, according to their problems. They also give education in economy, health, cleaning – ‘anything needed for the women to become free and healthy.’ They also support with how to develop and expand the coops. As coops start to bring in money, 15% from the profits is used to repay the initial support, if and when available.

Aboriya Jin are responsible for a number of women’s agricultural cooperatives in the Hasakah Canton, spanning a total of 2,200 hectares, largely made up of land from former state farms. Half of this land falls under the geographical ‘line 4’, where there is very little rain and the soil becomes more sandy. The projects in Sheddadi, the most southerly region, have been particularly affected by drought as there has been no rain for almost three years. There was a well, but it was destroyed during the attacks by ISIS. They are now renting wells from neighboring land with a percentage of the income from the project.

Every harvest they make a plan for the next year. They tell us why it is important to plant different crops as an ecological approach, to not exhaust the fertility of the land. They also plan to plant cotton in the future, as well as corn (maize) for oil. This is the strategic plan for the two agricultural projects in Derbesiye.

They are using drip irrigation – small holes in pipes. This is a better method than flow irrigation which saves water and is good for the land. They don’t use chemicals. They plan to start using compost from a compost factory in Qamishlo. The main problem is the water. “Without water, we cannot work in agriculture.”



**Kongireya Star in Hasakah**

Aside from agricultural projects, there are also several small bakery coops in the region, including inside a number of camps for internally displaced people who have fled from either ISIS or the Turkish state invasions. There’s a Lavin Cooperative sewing workshop in Hasakah, as well as Lavin shops in some of the cities; a canning place; carpentry workshops; two shops in the camps in Hasakah, and one in the hospital.



**Lavin women’s cooperative sewing workshop in Hasakah city**



**Hasakah new women’s economy project ‘Erd’ - a house is being constructed (now finished!)**

After we discuss the projects and consume plenty of sweets, coffee and tea, the women of Aboriya Jin take us to visit some of the projects. We see the site of a new women’s agricultural coop project (working name “Erd”), as well as a sewing workshop of Lavîn Cooperative and a workplace of Demsal, both women’s co-ops organised by Kongra Star which share different sides of a building in Hasakah.

The Lavîn workshop provides 4 shops in Girkê Legê, Hasakah, Derbesiye and Qamishlo. There are 12 women workers and three designers who create the clothing designs for the workshop. Some workers are paid a monthly salary, others are paid per piece, depending on the type of work and situation of the workers. The committee meets weekly. They take orders for institutions like hospitals and cleaning staff of AANES buildings, as well as private requests. They have a broken tweed and wool machine they want to repair.

Round the other side of the building, women are working away outside making produce from vegetables, such as pepper and garlic pastes, makdous, tirshik and jams to sell in the Demsal Cooperative shop. They also sell dried vegetables like aubergine, courgette, okra and some things that look like biscuits that become soup, which we’re told are a local specialty of [Deir ez Zor](#).

Finally, we’re taken to see the formative agricultural project ‘Erd’, which also means something like ‘earth’ or ‘agricultural land’. It currently looks like a vast tract of deserti-

fied earth, but the plan is to form a women’s agricultural cooperative to work the land, prioritising women who are struggling, to provide a livelihood and opportunity to work together collectively. If there is water it could become part of Demsal Cooperative and provide vegetables to be turned into produce at the site we visited earlier, for sale in the shops. Water for Rojava will support this project with a grant from a foundation of \$30,000. Ard covers a whopping 36 hectares of former state farmland outside of the city. Aboriya Jin have already begun the work with borrowed funds. They’ve dug two of the four wells needed and have already constructed much of a house which will provide accommodation for one or two guardian families.

On Wednesday we have meetings in Qamishlo with the democratic religions association commonly referred to as the OI – which just means ‘religion’, as well as with Kongra Star’s Education Committee.

We’re greeted by an Imam and one other man who are members of the Democratic Islam Congress (which existed before the OI and also seems to have brought it into existence), along with a Yezidi man, a Zoroastrian woman, a Syriac Christian man and an Armenian Christian woman, who we’re told is an honorable member of the committee. The committee members tell us about the problems each community has faced and their aim to overcome adversity between the religions in the region and create an example for peaceful co-existence.

“We work together as Syriac, Yezidi, Armenian, Muslim, Zoroastrians, we work together to build a democratic life. This is an example for Rojava society. We want to show



**Meeting the Democratic Religions Association**

the real face of religion here in North and East Syria – not portrayed as terrorists or something uncivilized.”

“When the revolution started in Rojava, as we know there was war everywhere. One thing we noticed was that all peoples and religions participated in this revolution, without separation. After the revolution was successful, we noticed how extremist groups were using the religion as a weapon. People here noted that they also need to build something against that, to bring people towards them and build an association to fight this extremist ideology by founding an association of religions.”

“Our main problem here is that we don’t accept each other; we deny each other. This is why we want to get rid of this problem in the Middle East. If god created us differently with different colours and languages, we should also be following our own religions and we should give each other space for this and not deny each others religions and experiences.”

Thursday is another day of meetings in Qamishlo. In the morning we meet with the [Furat Center for Studies](#) as part of a process of following up on the [International Water Forum](#) in 2021.

The Furat Center are an independent NGO (more like a local think tank), but they support the Autonomous Administration by focusing on their strategic projects and trying to support them with studies. They focus on political and economic issues in the region, especially on the water situation since Turkey’s invasion of Serekaniye, where the Alouk water station is located, in 2019.



**Furat Center for Strategic Studies**

“We’d like to do everything in our power to stop this water problem. It is related to international superpowers and regional states. We had a meeting with the Secretary of State of the USA about the Alouk Water Station and the Foreign Ministry of the British State, but they were not very interested in solving this problem. They said it is a global issue of water crisis, not a regional problem. They are not interested in working with North and East Syria, they are working more with the ‘Syrian opposition.’”

During our meetings we asked them to demilitarise the Alouk station as it is the main drinking water station which supplies Hasakah. We said we can work with the coalition. It’s not a big space, around 5 square kilometres. They asked us for details on the Alouk station and who is in control of it. We gave them more details and the factions controlling it. We told them the Turkish military and the international coalition can solve this problem. The main problem is the Euphrates River and Turkey cutting the water flow. If we get the usual amount which Turkey was supplying, then this would solve the problem.

Turkey is controlling the water in general and the whole region of Mesopotamia is affected by this, all the way down to Basra in Iraq. Many species of tree are disappearing. This is a geopolitical strategic issue. There is an internationally agreed share of the water for Syria and Iraq, but this is not being adhered to. This is the main problem facing the region. There are some small alternatives for some regions, but the problem is region-wide and huge. Alouk is under the control of militias and it is not even possible to know which ones as they change constantly, but Turkey is in control of this. Our request is to reach our voice to the international community and put political pressure on Turkey. As Furat Centre for Studies we can do some research to support this work, but what is needed is pressure on international powers.”

In the afternoon we meet with Kongra Star’s Ecology Committee and with Berivan Omar.

The Ecology Committee is a new structure within Kongra Star Women’s Movement, which was formed in May 2021. There was no specific women’s committee working on the topic of ecology previously. They have another small group called Bi Hev Re Karin (‘We can do it together’), which aims to make the environment clean and habitable for the people, especially places in nature where people go for recreation.

The committee is trying to focus on two main points:

- To build an ecological culture and identity.
- To build a social ecology in the region.

“We’re trying to instill the consciousness that ecological problems are the problems of everyone and we all have a role to play in this. We work with all structures who work with the Administration and try to reach all people through those structures. Because the problems in Rojava are so great, all committees need to include ecology in their work, not only us. Because of this, we now have 10-13 committees coming together in one Ecology Committee, from structures such as economy, health, justice, education, unions, youth, Jineoloji and municipalities.”

“The regime always treated the region very badly. In the last 10 years we’ve been seeing desertification. According to reports, we are now living in a desert. A lot of diseases have begun, such as corona, asthma, now there is cholera. All of these are new to us. Despite all these problems, Turkey has been causing a lot of problems and have been committing three genocides: in Afrin, they’re cutting all the trees; in Serekaniye, they are cutting the water; they also have used chemical weapons in both Afrin and Serekaniye.”

“We work together with society, not above them. We don’t mind working with others outside, but our main work is inside the region with our society. This is our priority. Rojava protected everyone and paid a heavy price but got left behind by the international society and nobody is doing anything. We have been left alone.”

The Committee is an autonomous women’s structure which belongs to Kongra Star, but they cooperate with the Ecology Department of the AANES (which Berivan Omar is part of) and work mainly with the communes and villages, giving workshops and seminars. They also have a relationship with Keziyen Kesk. In just one seminar, more than 2,000 women participated and more than 2,000 trees were planted.

Next we meet with Berivan Omar, the Vice Co-Chair of the Department of Local Administration and Ecology in the Cizire Region. The water departments, municipality and ecology structures all work together in this structure. Berivan specialises in Ecology.

We ask if there is a discussion about regulating the use of ground water? For example limiting the new boreholes being drilled? She replies that this is a big problem, especially in Hasakah.

“It is being discussed. A lot of the water is either salty or undrinkable... We always look for alternatives, we are not just drilling boreholes, but our options are very limited. When it’s raining we try to harvest water and treat it, but since 2019 it hasn’t rained. In other places, like Qamishlo, the situation is better. There’s storage water and it’s drinkable. We try to create some structures, not let every family dig their own well, to control the situation. Aside from the risk of the ground water disappearing it’s in our interest to find alternatives.”

A few days after this meeting the AANES body responsible for agriculture and irrigation issues a ban for drilling new wells to protect the ground water resources from depletion.

Today was the five year anniversary of the [liberation of Raqqa](#) from ISIS. Raqqa is outside our travel zone, but we read of a huge commemoration event to mark the occasion in the city.

Big news of the day is that the [Turkish-backed](#) forces who occupy Alouk water station finally resume [pumping water](#) toward Hasakah after 88 days cutoff – though it has not yet reached Hasakah itself.

The next day is a Friday, which means another day off, since most places are closed.

Friday in Syria is like Sunday in Europe and people mainly stay home. Whereas Saturday is like Saturday, more of a shopping day. We have an update meeting online with absent members of the committee and tidy up our notes.

On Saturday we decide to go on an outing to Dêrik. We drop in to visit a cultural centre and happen to meet Hacı Mûsa, the singer of [Şervano](#) and at least one or two [other songs](#) by Hunergeha Welat. We all get a bit star struck and take lots of photos with him, as well as some videos of him singing, along with some sharing of music by us. We also get a spontaneous performance by a Kurdish children’s choir! The centre is organised as part of the TEV-CAND, the democratic confederation of cultural works and organisations.

We hear that water from Alouk station [finally reached Hasakah](#), after two days to trickle down the pipes.



**Kurdish singer Hacı Mûsa in the Cultural Center in Dêrik, organised as part of the TEV-ÇAND.**

## Week 4: the final week! - meetings in Qamishlo with Keziyen Kesk, Nextep, RIC, Rojava University and more coop structures

On Sunday (which is like Monday here), most of our delegation go into Qamishlo for a second meeting with Kêziyên Kesk and to see one of their sapling nurseries on a large plot of land that was a former landfill site. Now they have 4,000 saplings growing there, with a separate well to water the area. They don't know if they will be able to stay on the land, which they currently have a 4 year lease for, but hope to turn it into a garden after they leave. They got a lot of equipment for free through collaboration with different structures and organisations – better quality soil, compost, grain, a water tank – and also adapted an old machine for packing wheat/lentils to put earth into the packs for the saplings (10,000 bags in 10 hours!). Some of the trees are already growing – the biggest are peach, cypress and stone pine. They got tons of date palm stones which they are planting now, along with a drought-resistant species of palm which could be planted south of Hasakah. Other fields are dedicated to lawrence, cocoa, citrus, mango, or kaki. There are eight more sites like this, and another in development. Because almost all the work was done by volunteers, they want to give the saplings away for free, they don't want to sell anything. Now they also have three paid specialist agricultural workers onsite, and are hoping for support from the Autonomous Administration to be able to retain these.

We get a chance to meet briefly with an ecology educator called Mohammed before it's time for our meeting with Nextep, a local organisation who played a role in the 2021 Water Forum. [Nextep](#) was founded in 2021. They presented a survey about water shortage related problems in the NES. The organisation's executive director Hozan tells us the work is done mainly by volunteers, though some funding has come from media houses that like to get on the ground coverage. They're keen to use dialogue as a method, and are interested in being involved with projects on water and other topics. After the meeting, Water for Rojava gives a small grant of 500 euros for Nextep to organize two dialogues on water harvesting, to be held in early 2023.

On Monday part of the delegation meets with Rojava Information Center (RIC) in Qamishlo to discuss media work. We are impressed by all the different ways they get information and real time news as it is happening from a multitude of sources, and how

Kêziyên Kesk sapling nursery in Qamishlo



**The hall named in honour of David Graeber at Rojava University in Qamishlo.**

much care they take to verify the information. The RIC now have an Arabic office, as well as an English language one, though they work in several languages.

That evening we hold an online meeting on water harvesting in NES to follow up on [the first meeting in April, 2022](#), with participants from Europe and NES, facilitated by Save the Tigris.

There's also a [drone attack](#) in Qamişlo that evening. According to [figures from RIC](#), this is Turkey's 86th drone attack in NES in 2022. We've also learned news of two of the women from Aboriya Jin that Solidarity Economy Association met on their first delegation visit in 2018. One was killed in the war, while the other is being held as political prisoner, as far as we know without trial, for over a year in the KRI.

Tuesday is our final day all together. We have meetings with various departments at Rojava University at their very impressive campus on the north side of Qamishlo, with support from a friend from the Arabic office of the RIC who is a student. We learn that there's a Department of Irrigation at the Agriculture Department of AANES in the Himmo area of Qamişlo and there are nine projects planned this year with students in Himmo, with wheat, barley, lentils, greenhouses, vegetables. A professor from Turkey brought different types of wheat and cotton to see if they can be grown here and are good for this environment as a trial. There's also a wormery project to make compost.

Our last meeting all together is followed by a small tour of the campus where we can see the sapling nursery there, which is also connected to the work of Keziyen Kesk.



**Rojava University**



**We gave books to the Social Sciences Department at Rojava University**



**Rojava University greenhouse**

On the way home we drop into Lavîn women’s co-operative [shop](#) in Qamishlo, which is stocked with clothing made in the workshop we visited in Hasakah, as well as beautiful scarves, bracelets and other items. We stock up on gifts for friends and to help with SEA’s [crowdfunding](#) efforts.

Wednesday marks the official end of our delegation. This is also our last day with the car, so we squeeze in one final meeting with a general (not just women) economy structure in Qamishlo. It seems there has been huge development in the way the economy structures are organised since our last visit, as we requested to meet with ‘general economy’ (Aboriya Gishti), and the meeting turns out to be at the office of the Qamishlo Canton Cooperative, which we were not aware existed. Their role is to support the development of cooperatives in the Qamishlo Canton which do not fall under the remit of Aboriya Jin, and they are responsible for solving problems and financially supporting these coops when possible. They can also offer consultancy. Four members of the coop greet us in their office, including two women who organise a women’s economy committee of the coop. We again read the letter from the ICWG, which is hugely appreciated by the cooperative organisers present, and forward them the Arabic translation on whatsapp.

“The cooperative institutions and bodies in Rojava should aim to build a cooperative. The aim is to develop the ideology of the people. Our people are in a really bad situation and we are aiming to fix the economy of the region. The crisis in the world system



**Jinwar Women’s Village**

should be solved with cooperatives. Our mission is to get rid of capitalism and build up society to remove individualism and work together.”

Despite the delegation being formally over, some of us remain a further few days in Rojava and get the opportunity to do various things, like visiting Hayaka Nature Reserve, spending time with the Jineoloji Committee, visiting Jinwar Women’s Village, and attending a commune meeting in a small village near [Derbesiye](#), before finally leaving the region.

Throughout this time, we hear of more drone attacks and assassinations. The Rojava Information Center [documented](#) 130 drone strikes in 2022, killing 87 people – up 46% from 2021. The highest number of attacks are in November, just after we leave the region, when Turkey launches “Clawed Sword”, a large-scale air operation targeting key oil and gas infrastructure in the Jazira region. On 20 November 2022, the Turkish Air Force bombs dozens of targets throughout the autonomous region of North and East Syria from [Shehba](#) to [Derik](#) with fighter jets and drones. Turkey also [bombs](#) a water station west of [Kobanê](#) on 22 December, 2022, seriously injuring three workers. [Read our solidarity message.](#)

In general our mission was a huge success, as we were able to visit and learn about

several projects we have already funded as Water for Rojava, thanks mainly to [donations](#) from people all over the world. We met with many water, economy and civil society organisations and learned about their work and future projects while also developing relationships and gaining a deeper understanding of the region as a whole – and especially the current historical moment and enormous challenges the people and the revolution are facing.

Water for Rojava is still accepting donations to support this important work [via the link on this page](#).







# WATER FOR ROJAVA



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