



New World Embassy

Rojava

روج آفا
روجا

26-27 November
Oslo City Hall, Norway

Democratic Self-Administration
of Rojava & New World Summit
(Studio Jonas Staal)

Colophon

The **Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava** is the coordinating body of the Rojava region, including its many communes and municipalities, involved in the project of self-governance known as “stateless democracy.” The autonomous region, since its foundation, has invested in creating cultural spaces, such as Tev-Çand’s cultural centers and the Rojava Film Commune.

The **New World Summit** is run by Studio Jonas Staal. The studio of artist Jonas Staal further consists of producer Younes Bouadi and programmer Renée In der Maur. Long-term New World Summit collaborators include, among others, architect Paul Kuipers and graphic designer Remco van Bladel.

After Belonging Agency is the curatorial team of the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2016 consisting of Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco, Ignacio G. Galán, Carlos Mínguez Carrasco, Alejandra Navarrete Llopis, and Marina Otero Verzier.

Oslo Architecture Triennale (OAT) is the Nordic region’s biggest architecture festival, and one of the world’s main arenas for investigation, discussion, and dissemination of architectural and urban challenges. Through various events and media, OAT seeks to challenge the field of architecture, engage the public, and inspire local and international debate.

URO is a program at **KORO Public Art Norway**, which supports the production of art projects that explore contemporary art’s diverse means of expression in the public realm. Through its activities, the program aims to increase the diversity of all aspects of art in public spaces

New World Embassy: Rojava development team: Seher Aydar, Refik Gefur, Sheruan Hassan, Amina Osse, Jonas Staal, and Adem Uzun (concept); *After Belonging Agency* (curators); Younes Bouadi (production); Renée In der Maur (program); Paul Kuipers (architectural design); Remco van Bladel (visual identity); Landstra & de Vries (construction); Riwi Collotype (printing); Stijn Toonen (architectural modelling); Ruben Hamelink (film documentation); Ernie Buts (photography); Aviva Stein (communication); Bo Krister Wallström and Kristine Jærn Pilgaard (KORO/URO) (co-production); Hanna Dencik Petersson (Oslo Architecture Triennial production).

The *New World Embassy: Rojava* is a temporary embassy in the Oslo City Hall, which represents, through cultural means, the ideals of “stateless democracy” developed by the communities of the autonomous region of Rojava, northern Syria. The embassy consists of a large-scale oval shaped architectural structure, designed as an “ideological planetarium.”

The embassy will operate for two consecutive days, bringing representatives from Rojava together with international politicians, diplomats, academics, journalists, students, and artists. Through open deliberation and public discussion the *New World Embassy: Rojava* proposes a platform to build new transnational relationships and explore alternative models of people’s diplomacy. This includes an analysis of the history, ideals, and implementation of stateless democracy; of the successes of Rojava in building a new civil society in a war-torn region; and finally the alternative that Rojava proposes in order to confront the crises of democracy seen on a global scale.

The *New World Embassy: Rojava* is a collaboration between the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava and Studio Jonas Staal.

The project is part of the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2016, *After Belonging: A Triennale In Residence, On Residence and the Ways We Stay in Transit*, and funded and co-produced by KORØ, Public Art Norway / URO.

Saturday November 26

13:00 – 19:00

13:00

- Welcome by Marianne Borgen (Mayor of Oslo)
- Welcome by Seher Aydar and Refik Gefur (Kurdish Communities of Oslo)
- Introduction by Jonas Staal (Artist and founder of the New World Summit)

13:40

Keynote by Co-Ambassador Asya Abdullah (Co-Chair Democratic Union Party, PYD)

14:05

Short break (10 min.)

14:15

Panel I—History & Politics

Chaired by Joost Jongerden (University of Wageningen)

- Asya Abdullah,
- Macer Gifford (People's Protection Units, YPG)
- Bassam Said Ishak (Syriac National Council)
- Kariane Westrheim (University of Bergen)

15:30

Break (1 hour)

16:30

- Welcome by Refik Gefur and Seher Aydar
- Welcome by Marina Otero (After Belonging Agency)

16:50

Keynote by Co-Ambassador Sinem Mohammed (Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava)

17:20

Short break (10 min.)

17:30

Panel II—Culture & Self-Determination

Chaired by Maria Hlavajova (BAK, basis voor actuele kunst Utrecht)

- Sinem Mohammed
- Moussa Ag Assarid (Free Azawad)
- Laura Raicovich (Queens Museum)
- Shela Sheikh (Goldsmiths, University of London)

19:00

Conclusion

Panel I – History & Politics
Saturday November 26
13:00 - 15:30

This opening panel focuses on the history of the Kurdish Revolutionary Movement, the recent history of Kurdistan, and in particular the situation in Rojava following the declaration of autonomy in 2012. It will address the fight against the Assad regime and jihadist organizations such as the Islamic State, and the implementation of the Rojavan model of democratic confederalism. How and why was the idea of a “democracy without a state”—a stateless democracy—as Kurdish revolutionary Abdullah Öcalan described it, developed in the first place? In what way has this stateless democracy been able to unify the different peoples in the Rojava region, and how should we understand its day-to-day practice?

Panel II – Culture & Self-Determination
Saturday November 26
16:30 - 19:00

In Rojava, the struggle for autonomy is simultaneously an armed struggle and a cultural struggle. In the case of the Kurdish struggle, Kurdish cultural identity was long denied and suppressed. Art and culture became a means of resistance; through clandestine poetry, literature, and music, a Kurdish identity has been kept alive. Since the start of the Rojava Revolution in 2012, art and culture have gained a central role for all peoples in expressing and celebrating the cultural plurality of Rojava while rejecting homogenous nation-state policies. What is the role of art and culture in imagining new models of democracy? And how does the cultural struggle of Rojava relate to other struggles, from the struggle of the Kel Tamasheq (Tuareg) peoples in the Sahara and Sahel regions to civil uprisings in the form of the Occupy movement and Black Lives Matter in the United States?

Sunday November 27 13:00 – 19:00

13:00

- Welcome by Refik Gefur and Seher Aydar
- Welcome by Hanna Dencik Petersson (Oslo Architecture Triennale, OAT)
- Introduction by Jonas Staal

13:30

Keynote by Co-Ambassador Aldar Xalil (Movement for a Democratic Society, Tev-Dem)

13:55

Short break (10 min.)

14:05

Panel III— Conflict & Diplomacy

Chaired by Radha D'Souza (University of Westminster)

- Aldar Xalil
- Runar Myrnes Balto (Political advisor to the Sámi Parliament)
- Sana Soleman Elmansouri (World Amazigh Congress)
- Hanne Sophie Greve (Judge at the Gulating High Court of Western Norway, and former judge at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg)

15:30

Break (1 hour)

16:30

Welcome by KORO Public Art Norway/ URO

16:50

Keynote by Co-Ambassador Salih Muslim (Co-Chair Democratic Union Party, PYD)

17:15

Short break (10 min.)

17:25

Panel IV— Solidarity & Transdemocracy

Chaired by Radha D'Souza

- Salih Muslim
- Kate Shae Baird (Barcelona en Comú)
- Despina Koutsoumba (The Front of the Anticapitalist Left, ANTARSYA)
- Lorenzo Marsili (DiEM25/ European Alternatives)
- Katerin Mendez (Feminist Initiative!)

19:00

Closing words by Refik Gefur and Seher Aydar

Panel III – Conflict & Diplomacy
Sunday November 27
13:00 - 15:30

Rojava has developed its own unique model of democratic confederalism—also known as stateless democracy. The Rojava embassy in this light should be considered as a stateless embassy: not aimed solely at establishing relations between states, but rather between peoples. Norway has led peace negotiations relating to the struggles for self-determination in Palestine, Colombia, and the Philippines. How does the future of people’s diplomacy as proposed by Rojava relate to these endeavors? And how do other stateless movements, such as that of the Sámi and Amazigh peoples, relate to the ideal of stateless diplomacy?

Panel IV – Solidarity & Transdemocracy
Sunday November 27
16:30 - 19:00

Out of the Syrian Civil War, the autonomous government of Rojava emerged, bringing into practice an alternative model of stateless democracy. Crisis can produce utter devastation, while at the same time, creating the conditions for radical political alternatives. What can international emancipatory political organizations, platforms, and movements learn from the Rojava Revolution? What can be learned from the economic and refugee crises in Greece, the rise of ultranationalism and even fascist organizations in Europe, and the politics of misogyny and patriarchy now emerging on a global scale? What are the alliances and processes of mutual learning between Rojava’s stateless democracy and the new municipal democracies, pan-European movements, and feminist platforms emerging throughout Europe and the world?

Co-Ambassadors:

Asya Abdullah

Asya Abdullah has been the elected Co-Chair of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) of Rojava since 2010. She was also one of its founding members in 2003. Abdullah has represented the party in meetings with international diplomats and prominent leaders all over the world, and continues to work towards the recognition and inclusion of Rojava in the international arena.

Sînem Mohammed

Sînem Mohammed is the European Representative of the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava. She has represented the Self-Administration in opening representation offices for Rojava all over Europe, including Berlin, Stockholm, Paris, and Moscow.

Salih Muslim

Salih Muslim is the elected Co-Chair of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) of Rojava since 2010. He was one of the founding members of the PYD in 2003. The Assad regime regarded the party as a particular threat due to its ability to mobilize discontent and therefore regularly prosecuted its members before the start of the Rojava Revolution in 2012. Currently, the PYD is the largest political party of Rojava and plays an important role within both the Democratic Self-Administration and the Movement for a Democratic Society (Tev-Dem), the umbrella movement of revolutionary political parties and civil society organizations in Rojava.

Aldar Xalil

Aldar Xalil is an Executive Council Member of the Movement for a Democratic Society (Tev-Dem). Tev-Dem is an inclusive and progressive body that seeks to meet the needs of all the various peoples of Rojava based on respect for all ethnicities, religions, and culture.

Panel I—History & Politics

Macer Gifford

Macer Gifford is a human rights activist and anti-IS campaigner from the UK who gave up his job in London as a currency trader to join the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Rojava. He has spent several months on the frontlines with the YPG, and is now working in Europe to increase Western aid to Rojava. He is also in the process of creating a charity to improve medical training and provide equipment for all those fighting on the frontlines against the Islamic State.

Bassam Said Ishak

Bassam Said Ishak is the President of the Syriac National Council (SNC). The SNC is a political body opposing the Assad regime. The Syriac Union Party and the autonomously organized police forces of Sutoro and military forces of the Syriac Military Council work closely with their Kurdish and Arab counterparts in establishing the Democratic Self-Administration while fighting the so-called Islamic State.

Joost Jongerden

Joost Jongerden is an assistant professor at the Center for Space, Place and Society at Wageningen University and has a special appointment as Professor at the Asian Platform for Global Sustainability & Transcultural Studies at Kyoto University in Japan. His main interest is the relation between people, place, and power. He is the author of several books and articles about the

Kurdish issue in Turkey, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and democratic confederalism/democratic autonomy in Bakur and Rojava. In October 2015 Jongerden partook in the fifth New World Summit in Rojava as a member of the international delegation.

Kariane Westrheim

Kariane Westrheim is a professor at the Department of Education, University of Bergen. Her research focuses on issues of multiculturalism, knowledge, and identity construction within social and political movements, and education in areas of war and conflict. Besides her academic research, Westrheim has been active in several commissions monitoring Turkey's compliance with EU's accession criteria and the human rights situation in Turkey and in Bakûr in particular. While active as the chairwoman of the EU's Turkey Civic Commission, she was denied entry to Turkey in 2010.

Panel II—Culture & Self-Determination

Moussa Ag Assarid

Moussa Ag Assarid is a writer, and from 2012-2016 has served as European spokesperson of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL). In 2016, he founded Free Azawad, an organization that aims to further the struggle for an independent Azawad. Together with artist Jonas Staal, he founded the New World Embassy: Azawad at BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht (NL).

Maria Hlavajova

Maria Hlavajova is the artistic director of BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht since 2000, and of the international research project FORMER WEST (2008–2016). Hlavajova has organized numerous projects at BAK and beyond, including the series Future Vocabularies (2014–ongoing) and New World Academy; the latter was co-founded by BAK and artist Jonas Staal in 2013, as a learning platform where stateless organizations teach artists and students on the role of art in political struggles. BAK also hosted the first iteration of the New World Embassy; the New World Embassy: Azawad in 2014, and co-organized the New World Summit: Stateless Democracy in Utrecht in 2016.

Laura Raicovich

Laura Raicovich is Director of The Queens Museum in New York. She focuses on socially engaged art practices that address the most pressing social, political, and ecological issues of our times, and has defined her career with artist-driven projects and programs. Prior to the Queens Museum, Raicovich served as the Deputy Director of the Dia Art Foundation and the Director and initiator of the Creative Time's Global Initiatives.

Shela Sheikh

Shela Sheikh is a lecturer at the Centre for Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths (University of London), where she convenes the MA Postcolonial Culture and Global Policy. Prior to this, Sheikh was

Research Fellow and Publications Coordinator on the “Forensic Architecture” project based in the Centre for Research Architecture, and Associate Lecturer in the Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths. She received her PhD in History from Goldsmiths with ‘I am the martyr (x)’: Philosophical Reflections on Testimony and Martyrdom, and is currently working on a multi-platform research project around colonialism, botany, and the politics of the soil.

Panel III—Conflicts & Diplomacy

Runar Myrnes Balto

Runar Myrnes Balto is the political advisor to the executive council of the Sámi Parliament of Norway. He belongs to the Norwegian Sámi Association (NSR), which is historically the main Sámi organization in Norway and has been the dominant political group in the Sámi Parliament for 21 of the 27 years that the parliament has existed. Balto studied Development Studies at the University of Oslo, where he worked towards international student solidarity. He participated as the chair of a Sámi cultural festival called Márkomeannu, which focuses on revitalization of Sámi culture, language, and identity.

Radha D’Souza

Dr Radha D’Souza is a social justice activist from India where she worked

with labor movements and democratic rights movements as organizer and an activist lawyer. D'Souza is a writer, critic, and commentator, and she has practiced law in the High Court of Mumbai in the areas of labour rights, constitutional and administrative law, public interest litigation, and human rights. She is currently a Reader in Law at the University of Westminster in London.

Sana Soleman Elmansouri

Sana Soleman Elmansouri is a representative of the World Amazigh Congress, Amazigh activist, journalist, and television presenter, well known as the first Amazigh television presenter in Libya and the first to present shows in the Amazigh language. She is an advocate for Amazigh and women's rights, both in Libya and internationally. During the Libyan uprising in 2011 she presented "Libya, Al Nass' (Libya, the People). In October 2015 Elmansouri partook in the fifth New World Summit in Rojava as a member of the international delegation.

Hanne Sophie Greve

Hanne Sophie Greve is a Norwegian judge. She is Vice President of the Gulating High Court for Western Norway and has previously served both on the European Court of Human Rights (1998-2004), as well as the UN's Commission of Experts Establish Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), where she examined and analyzed information regarding breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other international humanitarian law violations

that occurred in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Panel IV—Solidarity & Transdemocracy

Kate Shae Baird

Kate Shea Baird is based in Barcelona where she works in international advocacy for local governments. She is part of the Coordination Team and International Committee of Barcelona en Comú, the citizen platform currently governing the City of Barcelona. Kate has written on Catalan and Spanish politics for Novara Media, Red Pepper, Open Democracy, Indy Voices, Planeta Futuro, and Sentit Critic.

Despina Koutsoumba

Despina Koutsoumba is an archaeologist and a member of the Region of Attica Council of the Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left (ANTARSYA). She campaigns against the austerity measures that have been forced upon Greece by the Troika, as well as and the economic capitalization upon historical monuments, following the Greek Debt Crisis.

Lorenzo Marsili

Lorenzo Marsili is one of the initiators of DiEM25 and the cofounder of European Alternatives. He is also the initiator and current spokesperson of the European Initiative for Media Pluralism, an international campaign demanding better

protection for media pluralism and freedom at European level. He has previously worked in setting up the Transeuropa Festival and was founding editor of Naked Punch Magazine. He has degrees in philosophy, sociology, and China studies and initiated a multi-year arts exchange programme between cultural innovators in China, Brazil, and Europe, called Transnational Dialogues.

Katerin Mendez

Katerin Mendez is a Member of the Malmö City Council for Feminist Initiative (F!). F! is a feminist political party in Sweden formed in 2005 that holds seats in many municipalities of Sweden as well as in the European Parliament. The party takes a feminist approach to a variety of political and social issues, and emphasizes the importance of gender equality and solidarity with minorities and refugees as well as the importance of a feminist ecology. Mendez traveled to Rojava in 2015 as part of the international delegation organized by the Democratic Self-Administration and the New World Summit.



Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)
(Kurdish: Hêzên Sûriya
Demokratik; Syriac: Haylawotho
d'Suriya Demokratoyto;
Arabic: قوات سوريا الديمقراطية)

A military alliance, founded on October 10, 2015, comprising of Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, and others, with the goal of liberating Syria from IS and establishing a self-governing democratic Syria. Among its thirty forces are the YPJ, YPG, the Syrian Arab Coalition, the Al-Sanadid Forces, the Syriac Military Council, and the Burkan Al-Firat Operations Center. In May 2016 the SDF began Operation: Wrath of the Euphrates to liberate Raqqa and the surrounding region. Complementary to the SDF, the political alliance Democratic Council of Syria was established on December 10, 2015.



Democratic Union Party (PYD)
(Kurdish: Partiya Yekîtiya
Demokratik)

Founded in 2003, the PYD has become the largest political party in Rojava. Advocating democratic autonomy, its policies are based on the council system and promote

gender-equality, secularism, pluralism, and self-governance. The party is a member of the international organization Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK). Before the start of the Rojava Revolution in 2012, the PYD and its members were often prosecuted by the Ba'ath regime. Since then, it has played a vital role in the Rojava and actively partakes in the Movement for a Democratic Society (Tev-Dem) and the Democratic Self-Administration.



Movement for a Democratic
Society (Tev-Dem)
(Kurdish: Tevgera Civaka
Demokratik)

The coordinating body of the council structure of Rojava, founded in 2011. Tev-Dem encompasses all the supporting political parties, and civil society organizations, social movements, and professional and trade organizations. The PYD is the largest political party within Tev-Dem but it includes various other parties among which the Syriac Union Party (SUP). Kongreya Star is the parallel coordinating organ of the women's councils and organizations.



**Star Congress of Women
(Kongreya Star)
(until early 2016: Star Union of
Women, Yekîtiya Star)**

The coordinating body of women's organizations in Rojava that encompasses the women's councils, academies, cooperatives, and other women's initiatives and organizations in Rojava that adhere to the model of democratic autonomy. Its main goal is the liberation of women in all spheres of life. Star is a reference to the goddess Ishtar.



**People's Protection Units (YPG)
(Kurdish: Yekîteyên Parastina Gel)**

The main defense force of Rojava established in 2011 based on voluntary participation and the principle of self-defense. Originally a mixed-gender force, it became an all-male organization upon the establishment of the Women's Protection Units in 2013. It has been the most successful force in the fight against the so-called Islamic State. The YPG joined the Syrian Democratic Forces upon its creation in 2015 and is the largest force within the SDF.



**Women's Protection Units (YPJ)
(Kurdish: Yekîteyên Parastina
Jinê)**

The all-women's defense force of Rojava, created in 2013. As the parallel organization to the YPG it works closely together with the YPG although they are each organized autonomously. It has a vital role in the fight against IS and has received international recognition for its role in the liberation of Kobanî in 2015. In 2015 it also joined the SDF.



**Revolutionary Youth Movement
(Kurdish: Tevgera Cîwanên
Şoreşger)**

The most active youth movement of Rojava originating from of the Youth Commission of Syria, which opposed the Ba'ath regime. Its members reclaimed many of the buildings of the Ba'ath regime during the early days of the Rojava Revolution and put them to use for social self-organization. It organizes protests, newspapers, seminars, sports, and recreational activities for people aged 12 to 27.



Revolutionary Young Women's Movement (Kurdish: Tevgera Cîwanên Jinên Şoreşger)

The women's organization of the Revolutionary Youth Movement, it adheres to the same principles as the Revolutionary Youth Movement but places a particular emphasis on the education, organization, and liberation of girls and women between the ages of 12 and 27.



Al-Sanadid Forces (Arabic: قوات الصناديد)

The Al-Sanadid Forces are the militia connected to the Şammar tribe in Rojava, the largest Arab tribe in the region comprising of approximately one million members living in Canton Cizîrê of Rojava and Iraq. Al-Sanadid was founded in early 2015 to support the YPJ and YPG in the struggle against IS. Historically the Şammar tribe has strongly opposed Wahhabism and Radical Islam. It was the only tribe in the Al-Hasakah Governorate that refused to fight the Kurdish protestors for the Assad government during the 2004 riots of Qamişlo. They joined the Syrian Democratic Forces upon its creation in 2015.



Syriac Union Party (Syriac: ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܫܘܪܝܐ)

Syriacs are Aramaic Christians that make up about 10-12 % of the population of Syria. Established on 1 October 2005, the SUP has taken up an active role within the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava, aligning with the PYD in favor of secular, democratic, and federalist policies in Rojava and Syria as a whole. The autonomously organized Syriac police forces of Sutoro and the military forces of the Syriac Military Council work in close cooperation with Kurdish and Arab organizations in establishing democratic confederalism and in the fight against IS.

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