



To the participants and organisers of the ‘Crossing Borders’ Conference

Your conference has been brought to our attention as one of your keynote speakers is outspoken Assad regime supporter, Tim Anderson. As the vast majority of Syrian refugees are fleeing the brutal oppression of the Assad regime, it is extremely disquieting to see an open supporter of the regime invited to speak at the conference.

Anderson has been open about his beliefs, having written numerous articles defending the Assad regime, published an ebook titled ‘The Dirty War on Syria’ and has taken part in a ‘solidarity’ delegation to visit Syria in December 2013 where he met with Bashar al-Assad. That Anderson chose to visit Syria after the regime had committed the August 22nd chemical weapons massacre against civilians in the suburbs of Damascus, shows his real level of concern for the lives of Syrian civilians. Academics who provide political cover for dictatorships should not be invited to participate in conferences concerning refugees fleeing those dictatorships.

We also note the conference does not appear to have any Syrian activists invited to speak, despite the violent suppression of the Syrian revolution being one of the central drivers of the refugee crisis. The conference statement actually makes no mention of the Assad regime at all, despite its central responsibility for the Syrian exodus. The fact the conference is sponsored by the Stop The War Coalition and stopimperialism.org, two organisations which have been unwilling to condemn or criticise the actions of the regime, causes us further concern.

We call on the conference organisers to disinvite Tim Anderson and issue a strong statement condemning the repression of the Assad regime against the Syrian people. If they are unwilling to do this, we call on other participants like Paul Mason and Nina Power, activists who are committed to the struggle for social change and against oppression, not to participate in the conference alongside known regime apologists. We welcome discussion and debate about the causes and solutions to the refugee crisis, but pro-regime apologists should not be a part of this discussion.

Yours sincerely,

- Mark Boothroyd, Syria Solidarity UK
- Yasmine Nahlawi, Rethink Rebuild, Syrian Community of Manchester
- Dr Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal, Syrian Association of Yorkshire
- Dr Mohammad Alhadj Ali, Syrian Welsh Society
- Amer Masri, Scotland4Syria
- Dr Abdullah Hanoun, Syrian Community South West
- Oz Katerji, Journalist
- James Bloodworth, Journalist and Author
- Emanuel Stoakes, Journalist
- Richard Seymour, Author
- Thomas Pierret, Lecturer, University of Edinburgh
- Hussein Kesvani, Journalist
- Eliot Higgins, Bellingcat
- Shakeeb Al-Jabri, Syrian activist
- Tom Dale, Journalist
- Idrees Ahmad, Lecturer, University of Stirling
- Razan Ghazzawi, Syrian activist
- Nick Cohen, Journalist