

# SPECIAL FILE

HUNGER STRIKE IN PRISONS OF TURKEY

14.11.2012



Prepared by Foreign Affairs Commission of Peace and Democracy Party

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# **PEACE AND DEMOCRACY PARTY**

## **INFORMATION FILE ON HUNGER STRIKE IN TURKEY**

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#### **1- Letter from BDP Co-Chairs; Mr. Selahattin DEMİRTAŞ and Ms. Gültan KIŞANAK:**

14<sup>th</sup> November 2012

Dear all,

Today, it has been 64 days since Kurdish political prisoners began indefinite hunger strikes in the Turkish prisons. At this moment, health status of prisoners on hunger strike is severely impaired and came to a very critical stage. Unfortunately, death news from prisons is imminent. This document is prepared in order to inform international public opinion that we are extremely concerned that loss of life may be imminent and ask your solidarity to prevent it.

On September 12, 2012; 64 Kurdish political prisoners have started an indefinite and irreversible hunger strike in 7 Prisons in Turkey. On 22 September 2012, ten days later 79 more prisoners joined the hunger strike. With new participants these numbers are continuously increasing.

According to research of Human Rights Association, **at least 818 Kurdish political prisoners and convicts in prisons are on an indefinite and irreversible hunger strike in 68 prisons. According to the announcement from political prisoners, thousands of convicts and prisoners have been in indefinite and irreversible hunger strike since 5 November 2012.**

Political prisoners on hunger strike have made two specific demands and stated that they will not reverse their decision unless their demands are met. These demands are:

**1- The right to education and legal defense in mother tongue.**

**2- Ending the isolation of Mr. Abdullah Öcalan in Imrali prison in order to creating the conditions for dialogue and negotiation.**

According to the above mentioned demands, reason of the hunger strike is not for individual interest or awful conditions of the prisons in Turkey. Political prisoners believe that their existence in prisons is directly related with the conflicts between the Turkish Government and Kurdish political movement. Therefore, the prisoners and arrested politicians are considering themselves as “prisoner of war” or POW. The existing judicial system, the anti-terror law that amended in 2006 and security oriented governing are created a total war against Kurds’ fundamental rights. Freedom of speech, right to demonstration and demanding collective rights of the people perceived as “terrorist activity” by the prosecutors and the government as well. The existing Anti-terror law allows prosecutors to arrest everyone without concrete evidence. Therefore, more than 8000 Kurdish politicians, journalists, advocates, trade unionists and NGO members have been in prisons for many years without any verdict by judges. Many of the participants of the hunger strike are victims of the existing law system. Their legal defenses in mother tongue are not provided due to the monist mentality. This situation is one of the reasons of the hunger strike.

Arrested members of the parliament, Mr. Faysal SARIYILDIZ, Ms. Gülser YILDIRIM, Mr. İbrahim Ayhan, Mr. Kemal AKTAŞ and Mayor of Derik, Ms. Çağlar Demirel are also participating to the



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indefinite hunger strike. Mayor of Diyarbakir, Mr. Osman BAYDEMİR, Members of the Parliament, Ms. Emine AYNA, Mr. Özdal ÜÇER, DTK Co-chair, Ms. Aysel TUĞLUK, Ms. Sebahat TUNCEL, Mr. Adil KURT, Mr. Sırrı Süreyya ÖNDER and Co-chair of BDP, Ms. Gültan KIŞANAK have been started to the indefinite hunger strike since 8-10 November in Diyarbakir. In case of absence of any concrete step from the AKP Government, more MPs, mayors and elected Kurdish Politicians will participate to the hunger strike. The main aim of the participations is to prevent AKP Government's insensible approach to this urgent issue. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Erdoğan continues to the nonconstructive speeches that ignores the importance of the crucial issue. This approach will cause traumatic results in Turkey.

According to the new amendment that provide legal defense in mother tongue includes irrational articles. Firstly, if a person demands defense in mother tongue, interpreter will not provided by the court. Cost of interpreter will be provided by the defense who don't prefer speak in Turkish. We perceive this amendment as discrimination. Therefore, the mentioned amendment won't contribute for ending the crisis. On the other hand, Mr. Öcalan's conditions and a principal promise for education in mother tongue are not considered by AKP Government. Unfortunately, the crisis is deepening due to the rising insensitivity.

Specifically, the health status of 384 political prisoners that began the hunger strike with the first three groups is severely impaired and their life is under extreme danger and at great vital risk.

Prime Minister Erdoğan said, "They are putting on a show, there is no hunger strike, no one is on hunger strike except for one person." He continued similar claims on various other platforms.

Another curious point is that Prime Minister Erdoğan, when reminded that one of the requests of hunger strikers is about Mr. Öcalan, suddenly started to talk about capital punishment. At 4th November 2012 in one of his party conferences, he said, "When you look at the polls, many people want capital punishment to be reinstated." Five days later in Indonesia, at a panel in 5th Bali Democracy Forum, he openly defended capital punishment in his speech by saying *"right now in Europe there is no capital punishment but did US remove it, did Japan remove it, did China remove it? That means capital punishment is also reasonable depending on the situation. We need to check ourselves, we need to be thinking of justice again, so that this humanity can find the peace again."* The timing of these statements is especially critical, in a time when the Kurdish issue and freedom of Mr. Öcalan are being discussed. It shows the type of mentality that we are facing.

Kurdish People's democratic struggle and their demands for fundamental rights are directly related with the ongoing hunger strike. Therefore, international awareness for the Kurdish Issue is one of the vital points. We hope that, this file will be a useful source to understanding the roots of the Kurdish Issue.

Respectfully yours,

**Gültan KIŞANAK and Selahattin DEMİRTAŞ**  
**Co-chairs of Peace & Democracy Party**

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#### **2- Parliamentary group speech by BDP Co-chair Mr. Selahattin Demirtaş on the 56<sup>th</sup> day of the hunger strikes, November 6, 2012:**



Dear guests, party members and laborers of the press,

Today, we have only one issue in our agenda; the hunger strike. Therefore, I would like to share our perspectives about this vital topic. The ongoing hunger strike is the one of the results of the Kurdish Issue!

56<sup>th</sup> day amounts to a threat to life and we do not have the luxury to discuss other issues. The cost of each step to be taken should be carefully calculated.

Demands are known well. We should discuss the reasons that have forced these people whose hands are tied and who are confined within four walls to start this serious protest of hunger strike.

In his group meeting Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan said "It is BDP inciting the hunger strikes." These are false statements. You can have someone organize a protest with an order, but not a not-eating protest that kills a person, erodes [his/her body] step by step. Those who tell these lies surely know this very well.

If you discuss hunger strike without taking into account 100 years-old Kurdish question and as if there does not exist such a problem; you would not understand the issue. We have to understand that hunger strikes, today on its 56<sup>th</sup> day, are directly related to 100 year-old Kurdish Question.



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Let us remember the headlines of what happened only in the last 3,5 years. What did people experience before they decided to start hunger strike 56 days ago? What did this society experience? Now if we remember them briefly, we will understand better why people have lied their bodies to death. 2009, April 14. It is the date 'KCK' operations has started. Since then, nearly 10 thousand politicians, young, old, women, men, mayor, all of them were detained and put in prisons. These operations have continued without interruption in the last 3.5 years. Most of these friends were imprisoned without even hearing an indictment for approximately 2 years. They did not even know what the accusation was. The trials began only after 2 years, and it turned out that the indictment was full of conspiracies. Our friends could not use their right to defense in the last 2 years. They waited in the courtrooms for months just to be able to say '*Ez li virim*' (*I'm here in Kurdish*). Their microphones were turned off by the judge. It is called unknown language as an insult. Defense lawyers were put on trial. Families who are supporting their friends and children were tortured with batons and gas. All of these took place in the last 3 years. Our party members were tortured for supporting rallies. Rallies that were banned. We passed 3 years in such an environment. As these happen, the government representatives and the President said "There is no such thing as defense in mother-tongue. This is a show."

First, in general elections of June 12, 2011, 12 of our independent candidates were vetoed; however, they stepped back upon various reactions. But a youth named Ibrahim Oruç was murdered. It has been a year since his murder but the prosecutor could not finish the investigation yet. We entered the elections without a candidate. However, we were still successful in many places. Hatip Dicle's seat was usurped. We held on to our common sense back then but after a mere week, applications of 6 of our MPs were canceled; they have been expecting their release since then.

Mr. Ocalan's 34 lawyers were imprisoned upon conspiracy. This is the only case in history with that many lawyers in it. There happened big military operations. Since the inception of confinement, 1037 people were killed in conflicts. They said "he gives orders to his lawyers." Go double check the numbers of casualties during lawyers' visit. On the contrary, the government caused these in the name of safety concept. In this period, they executed mass killings in Roboski; they killed 34 Kurdish youth were bombed and smashed by war planes. Since then, no one knows how the investigation is going. The file has been top secret for 1,5 years. "This incidence will not be kept in shadows" they said; they are all silent now. Our Newroz celebrations were banned. They intervened in our Newroz celebrations everywhere. Our demonstrations were banned. People, including our MPs, were tortured.



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While these happen, the media which has become AKP's broadcast body has either ignored them or insulted us. They have used abusive language towards our values and personalities. Prosecutors have dropped prosecution for our official complaints. The prosecutors who did not investigate our complaints prepared 754 summaries of proceedings on us. They watched with pleasure when BDP will be liquidated. They remained silent in the face of these injustices. Those who are in prison have watched these too. They have seen more than these. They have followed this development within four walls. They know what is done to them. They have seen the results of government's policy. They came to such a point where they made a decision 56 days ago. They said, "We will end this course of events." They said, "We will not let another one thousand people die, we will die", and they did it. Now I am asking, is it this picture or BDP's policies that induced this hunger strike? What happened in the last 3 years and especially that of the recent years, led those who are in prison to lay their bodies to death. This is the cause of hunger strikes. If you have a single document, a crumb of information that show it started with a BDP directive, disclose it and be silent otherwise.

The hunger strike is not an independent problem. It is the result of a problem. We do not want our friends to join on a hunger strike. If we knew that they are going to quit with a request, we would ask them to stop 10 times a day. We would never ever want a protest where our friends will end their own lives. If we do not understand the reasons and demands behind this, a solution cannot be generated. We are acting realistically. We want to achieve a result.

If the statements made by the Council of Ministers today had been made 20 days ago, the current situation would not have arisen. We pay attention to this statement, yet we have only a couple of days ahead of us. The content of this statement should be strengthened. There is no legal basis for preventing a lawyer visit in İmralı. This is the government committing a crime. Criminal Procedure Law article 20 regulates lawyer's visit to an inmate. Let them read this law again. Is there any article there stating that this visit is subject to the permission of the Prime Minister or the Minister of Justice? No, there is not. As the constitution and the laws are so obvious, how can a Prime Minister say 'leave aside the lawyer visit'? Which article do you rely on? Even the coup d'état constitution that you don't like mentions the rule of law. I am asking: with what authority, which article and statute is you saying 'I would not send lawyers to İmralı.' There is unlawfulness here. It is not under the authority of anyone to send or not to send a lawyer there. If he does not want to meet his lawyer, the statement would be taken and lawyer would leave.



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If a state, which says 'we are the grandchildren of Barbaros' when necessary, cannot go to an island that half an hour distance because of a 'broken coaster;' it is their shame not ours. If I were them, I would be honest and say, if we had wanted we could go there in 3 minutes, but we are not going.

We want to stop deaths both inside and outside prisons. This is why, we are lobbying and we are organizing protests.

We are saying that we have now reached to the point that we have to solve this. Though the statements made yesterday are inadequate and do not contain any concrete developments regarding the demands; we as BDP paid attention to them. This is a step forward, but we do not have time to take many steps. Those in prison must have also listened to these statements. They must be evaluating and discussing them. They will approach positively to taking mutual steps. Would it be wrong if the government guarantees a lawyer visit for İmralı? Would it be called a defeat? No. It is called using the authority granted by the constitution. It can pave the way for many developments. We offer all the support we can. We are open to provide this support to the government.

Deaths as a whole must be stopped. Deaths both inside and outside prisons should be stopped, for it is necessary to pave the way for negotiations. If a survey is conducted, it would be seen that the support for negotiations and peace is more than ever.

How do you come up with this debate on death sentence in such an environment? This is a wrong message and method. Even if you pass this law today, you cannot apply it retrospectively. Then, why are you creating a tension for the people and the process using this? Turkish people should know that there is no real counterpart to it. Even if this law passes, it can be applied only from now on. Tell us openly if your intention is different. Otherwise, close this discussion. Would it be a positive message if you discuss death penalty regarding that person at a period where 707 people have lied themselves to death? That is why; this language and style should be left aside. This issue should be closed permanently.



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### **3- Press Statement from BDP Co-Chair, Ms. Gültan KIŞANAK; 10 November 2012**



This country's conscience, Anatolia's voice and pen, Mr. Yaşar Kemal has said that "They (AKP Government) are destroying a generation, this is a genocide." in a press meeting regarding to the hunger strike. If a solution doesn't find out right now, 384 of hunger striker prisoners who ready to die for solution are in a critical level. We call everyone to common sense and conscientiously contribute to solving this issue by taking a stance.

We need to look that why we don't have any time. The prisoners have made many statements during 60 days. They wrote letters to the Ministry of Justice. Their families made demonstrations. Our party tried to transmit their messages to the public opinion. Actually, prisoners in hunger strike have screamed. It was a scream that means "enough is enough!". It was a scream for a message about demanding the solution. We have tried to announce this voice. We struggled for this. We made conversations, dialogues and contacts. We've filled streets and squares. However, all the activities are banned during the 60 days. All the demonstrations were tried to suppress with extreme violence by the police. We've tried to express that the demonstrations are organized for only announcing the voice of the solution. You are causing to death by the police attacks to the demonstrations.

The solution will directly depend to the awareness of the public opinion. That's why we are in streets and squares. Also, we are in contact with the government and try to show



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them this situation's importance. Unfortunately, our suggestions are ignored and our meetings are faced police attacks. We didn't yield. We know that, if we don't interfere to the process, people will die in prisons. To prevent the death in prisons will be possible by a strong voice from streets and squares.

However, we don't want to atone of our friends, prisoners while they are in bad conditions. They've put in stance by the hunger strike. It should be a part of historical responsibility. We respect to this. Everyone should respect to this stance. The mentioned demands cover us too. That's why; the demands are also our demands. Therefore, today, we as parliamentarians and mayors, starting to the indefinite and irreversible hunger strike. We want to let you know that, our action is sharing to the hunger striker prisoners' responsibility. All the BDP and the bloc MPs and mayors wanted to participate to the hunger strike.

Co-chair of Democratic Society Congress and MP, Ms. Aysel Tuğluk, me as Co-chair of BDP, Gültan Kışanak, MP for Hakkari, Mr. Adil Kurt, MPs for İstanbul, Mr. Sırrı Süreyya Önder and Sebahat Tuncel, MP for Diyarbakir, Ms. Emine Ayna, MP for Van City, Mr. Özdal Üçer and in the name of the BDP Mayors, Mayor of Diyarbakir, Mr. Osman Baydemir have started to the hunger strike in order to take this responsibility in the name of BDP and the Bloc.

We wish that the interrupted negotiations should continue and Kurdish Issue should be solved. The pressures and bans on Kurdish People and their mother tongue must be removed. So, we are starting to the hunger strike in order to reflect the voice to the public opinion. In case of solution and an ending decision by the prisoners, also we will end the hunger strike. Otherwise, we will be decisive like the hunger strikers in prisons.

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#### **4- Press Statement from Deputy Group Chair of BDP, Mr. İdris BALUKEN;**

**3 November 2012**



##### **To Press and Public opinion;**

Turkey's democratization and solving the Kurdish issue with the democratic ways 64 political prisoners began indefinite hunger strikes on September 12, 2012 today it is 63th day. Considering began the persistent health problems from the 40 day, as of the day critical health situation emerge more clearly.

Prisoners who are on indefinite hunger strike were 708 prisoners in the 54<sup>th</sup> day, and because of AKP Government's any sensitivity 10.000 political prisoners started hunger strike in the 55<sup>th</sup> day. At the same time 708 prisoners was declared; they did not want any medical intervention in the event of loss of consciousness. At present, because of 64 prisoners are in 63<sup>rd</sup> day, 74 prisoners are in 53<sup>rd</sup> day, 221 prisoners are in 38<sup>th</sup> day total of 359 prisoners are faced with the permanent nervous system and death. Due to ill- treatment in prisons, Gıyasettin Yalçın and Sit Kaya who are in Mersin E Type prison on hunger strike turned death fast. BDP MPs and Mayors are also on hunger strike for the same political demands. Many of the mayors as well as imprisoned MPs Faysal Sarıyıldız 15<sup>th</sup> of October, Gülser Yıldırım 25<sup>th</sup> of October, Kemal Aktaş, Selma Irmak and İbrahim Ayhan 5<sup>th</sup> of November started indefinite hunger strike because of AKP Government has not any sensitivity or attention to the demands. Besides the imprisoned mayors and MPs BDP Co Chair Gültan Kışanak, DTK Co Chair Aysel Tuğluk, BDP MPs Özdal Üçer, Emine Ayna, Sırrı Süreyya Önder, Adil Kurt, Sebahat Tuncel and Mayor of Diyarbakır Osman Baydemir started on hunger strike.

Since the first day of indefinite hunger strikes as approach with common sense we wanted the solution of Kurdish issue and process of democratization however instruments of AKP Government's are police forces and gas bombs. I would like to indicate AKP Government responsible for the deaths in prisons.



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#### **5- Basic Information on Hunger Strike (Updated on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012)**

On September 12, 2012; 64 Kurdish political prisoners have started an indefinite and irreversible hunger strike in 7 Prisons in Turkey.

Specifically, the health status of 154 political prisoners that began the hunger strike with the first two groups is severely impaired and their life is under extreme danger. Political prisoners on hunger strike have made two specific demands and stated that they will not reverse their decision unless their demands are met. These demands are:

**1- The right to education and legal defense in mother tongue.**

**2- Ending the isolation of Mr. Abdullah Öcalan in Imrali prison in order to creating the conditions for dialogue and negotiation.**

According to the above mentioned demands, reason of the hunger strike is not for individual interest or awful conditions of the prisons in Turkey. Political prisoners believe that their existence in prisons is directly related with the conflicts between the Turkish Government and Kurdish political movement. Therefore, the prisoners and arrested politicians are considering themselves as “prisoner of war” or POW. The existing judicial system, the anti-terror law that amended in 2006 and security oriented governing are created a total war against Kurds’ fundamental rights. Freedom of speech, right to demonstration and demanding collective rights of the people perceived as “terrorist activity” by the prosecutors and the government as well. The existing Anti-terror law allows prosecutors to arrest everyone without concrete evidence. Therefore, more than 8000 Kurdish politicians, journalists, advocates, trade unionists and NGO members have been in prisons for many years without any verdict by judges. Many of the participants of the hunger strike are victims of the existing law system. Their legal defenses in mother tongue are not provided due to the monist mentality. This situation is one of the reasons of the hunger strike.

Unfortunately, AKP Government has not any sensitivity or attention to the ongoing hunger strike. Prime Minister Erdoğan clearly lied when he was in Germany. According to Erdoğan, only one prisoner is continuing to the hunger strike. At the same time Minister of Justice announced that 683 prisoners and arrested people are in hunger strike. Unfortunately, PM Erdoğan is not focusing on solving the issue. The main approach of the government is disinforming the hunger strike.

On the other hand, while the people who protest the government because of its insensitivity, AKP Government and its police forces are continuing unbalanced attacks and



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arrest BDP members and protestors. We believe that, the reason of the ongoing arrestments is to prevent solidarity with the hunger strikers.

Therefore, we as BDP, call government to stop accusing BDP or hunger strikers. Government must respect to the Kurdish prisoners demands. The demands are fundamental rights of humanity. Therefore, PM Erdoğan must end this meaningless obstinacy. In case of insist to this negative manner, AKP Government will be main responsible of the closing tragedy.

No time to wait! Everyone from the earth should react to the AKP Government's totalitarian approach on Kurdish People and their fundamental rights. No state or power can prevent a human's freedom of speech or defense in mother tongue in democratic countries. No one should live without collective identity in their home country.

BDP urgently calls to government, international public opinion and institutions to prevent losing lives in prisons.

#### **Events on Hunger Strikes**

1. 4 prisoners who are in Şakran T type Prison No 4 are sentenced to solitary confinement. Besides, many prisons have started to the same method to isolating the strikers.
2. Although Berivan Elter who is in hunger strike has health report, a new report was taken and she picked up from Ankara to Diyarbakır (round trip 36 hours). Ms. Elter, health problems getting worse due to the forced trip.
3. Prisoners in hunger strike have informed their families about guardians' torture to end the hunger strike.
4. Some prisons don't provide any contact with their families or advocates.
5. Bottled water is not provided for hunger strikers in many prisons.
6. Hunger strikes are worrying for any intervention by the medics without the strikers' permission. On the other hand, Prime Minister Erdoğan and related authorities have declared about medical intervention without any permission.
7. Media is under censure by the government. Therefore, public opinion has not detailed information about the ongoing hunger strike. Erdoğan's hate speech and ignoring approach are dominant in the Turkish Media.

## **6- International Statements on the Hunger Strike**

The President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz has written a letter to Turkey Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin expressing his concern for the critical conditions of hunger strikers in Turkish prisons.

President Schulz stated:

"I follow with concern the hunger strike of jailed Kurdish prisoners, among them elected officials, and of Members of Parliament in Turkey.

My immediate concern is for the health of those undertaking this desperate non-violent action. I am confident that Turkish authorities are doing their utmost to provide the best medical assistance to all the inmates and protesters.

I call on hunger strikers to put an end to an action which is putting their life in peril and to revert to political dialogue as a way to advance their requests.

I call on the Turkish authorities to address the concerns of the protesters. In this respect, I welcome the government's proposed legislation amending the Code of Criminal Procedure to allow the use of mother tongue during courts proceeding. I hope this will be implemented swiftly and fully."



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### **Message from Noam Chomsky:**

"I would like to appeal to the Turkish government, both in terms of just plain humanity and also very significant reasons of political consequence and human rights, to respond to the desperate hunger strike, which is now reaching extremely dangerous conditions, by attending to the demands that have been put forth, which I think are just reasonable and to alleviate the crisis that is now arising and will get much worse if the Turkish government does not respond in a humane and in my view civilized way."



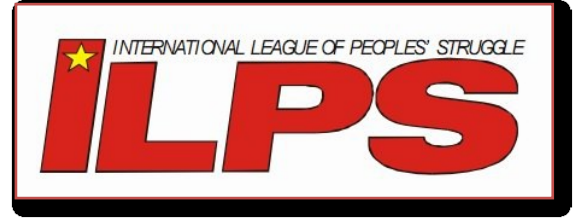
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=CLbzD9tNnzQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=CLbzD9tNnzQ)





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**The International League of Peoples Struggle (ILPS)** has issued a press statement in solidarity with Kurdish political prisoners on hunger strike in Turkish jails.



In the statement the ILPS (an alliance of more than 300 mass organizations in over 40 countries in Asia, Africa, North America, Latin America and Europe) said it "fully supports the just struggle of the Kurdish people for national self-determination and to the exercise of their collective rights in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres".

The ILPS "calls on all the member organizations of the ILPS and all people of goodwill to show their support to the hunger strikers by sending solidarity messages and doing solidarity actions condemning the repressive measures of the Turkish state and supporting the specific demands of the hunger strikers and their general demand for the exercise of the right of the Kurdish people to national self-determination".

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### **Message by Aralar Party in Basque;**

**Oct 29, 2012**

Aralar is worried about the health of the Kurdish political prisoners in hunger strike and supports their struggle in defence of their human rights.



More than 750 Kurdish political prisoners are in hunger strike in 58 Turkish prisons to demand the government of Ankara an end to the constant violations of their human rights.

Last week, Aralar contacted the Turkish embassy in Madrid to demand the Turkish government compliance with human rights of Kurdish political prisoners and in particular of those attending Mr. Abdullah Ocalan. The Turkish government flagrantly violates the human rights of Abdullah Ocalan prohibiting him to receive the visit of his family and lawyers

Kurdish political prisoners demand their right to study and communicate in their native language, as well as the end of the isolation of Abdullah Ocalan. Aralar understands that the Turkish government should abandon immediately its policy of violation of human rights and should create the conditions for holding a dialogue process to resolve the Kurdish conflict based on the respect of human and political rights of the Kurdish people

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#### **Message from Bîhar Euskal Kurdu Elkartea**

Dear friends,

We would like to show all our solidarity with all the hunger strikers, we support heartily all their fair demands. We hope that Turkish government will implement very quickly all the measures in order to prevent any death. We are sure that only dialogue and negotiations could solve the Kurdish question. Long live to brotherhood between Basque and Kurdish people!

With all the best wishes for everybody of you,

Bîhar Euskal Kurdu Elkartea



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#### **URGENT CALL FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

##### **“HUNGER STRIKERS DENIED MEDICAL CARE”**

Hundreds are on hunger strike (some of them since 12 September) in prisons across Turkey. Lawyers told Amnesty International that prison authorities have denied many hunger strikers access to medical care, further threatening their health.



On 12 September, around 60 prisoners began a hunger strike in seven prisons across Turkey. The hunger strikes were initiated as a protest against the authorities' longstanding refusal to allow Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Öcalan to meet with his lawyers and to demand the provision of education in the Kurdish language. Since September, the number of hunger strikes has grown. According to the Ministry of Justice, 682 prisoners in 67 prisons had joined the hunger strike by 2 November.

Lawyers representing the hunger strikers told Amnesty International that prison doctors are routinely refusing to conduct medical examinations of the hunger strikers, including checking the prisoners' blood pressure. Lawyers also said that in some cases, hunger strikers are being denied access to vital vitamins taken to the prison by the lawyers. One prisoner on hunger strike in Sincan F-type prison was allegedly made to travel 36 hours





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for a court hearing, despite severe mobility problems and a doctor's report advising against the travel.

There are further concerns r

were ill-treating prisoners as a result of their participation in the hunger strike protests.

Please write immediately in Turkish or your own language:

Reminding the authorities that hunger strikers are engaging in a peaceful form of protest and the Turkish authorities have an obligation to respect their right to freedom of expression, including their right to protest; ¶ Calling on the authorities to ensure that the hunger strikers have adequate access to qualified medical professionals and any medical assessment, advice and any treatment that they will accept voluntarily based on this assessment, and to ensure that there is no unjustifiable restriction on hunger striking prisoners from receiving vitamins provided by their lawyers or family members;

Calling on the authorities to ensure that no punitive measures are taken against prisoners on hunger strike and -

-  
treated or otherwise punished for their participation in the hunger strikes.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 DECEMBER 2012 TO:**

06659 Ankara, Turkey Fax:  
+90 312 417 71 13 (keep trying) Email: [sadullahergin@adalet.gov.tr](mailto:sadullahergin@adalet.gov.tr) Salutation: Dear Minister  
Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights Ayhan Sefer Üstün Commission Chairperson  
, 06543 Ankara, Turkey Fax: +90 312  
420 53 94

Email: [insanhaklari@tbmm.gov.tr](mailto:insanhaklari@tbmm.gov.tr)

Salutation: Dear Mr Üstün

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.



## **PEACE AND DEMOCRACY PARTY**

### **INFORMATION FILE ON HUNGER STRIKE IN TURKEY**

#### **>>>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

In Turkey, prison hunger strikes have been repeatedly used as a method of protest. On 20 October 2000, more than 1,200 prisoners went on hunger strike; this was in protest at plans to move them to new prisons where they were to be housed in small cells, rather than dormitories that hold up to 60 prisoners. Prisoners were concerned that they would be at greater risk of assault or torture. When raids began on 19 December, some 200 were still on hunger strike and many of them were reportedly close to death. Turkish authorities intervened by force to end the hunger strikes with the operation they termed “return to life”. This operation led to the deaths of 30 prisoners and two soldiers during raids into 20 prisons. The Justice Minister reportedly stated that “at least 16 prisoners died, most of whom set themselves on fire”. He did not say how the other prisoners had died.

Hunger strikes continued in the following two years, claiming the lives of dozens of people – some of whom were not prisoners.

Amnesty International does not support hunger strikes, nor does it try to persuade hunger strikers to end such a protest. The organization opposes any punishment of hunger strikers and attempts to coerce them to end their hunger strike. Such measures violate their right to freedom of expression, and may also amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The authorities have an obligation to ensure prisoners’ right to life and health and must ensure that hunger strikers, like other prisoners, have adequate access to qualified health professionals and any medical assessment, advice and any treatment that they will accept voluntarily based on this assessment.

## 7- Last News by Press

### Aljazeera

#### Turkey MPs join hunger strike for Öcalan

Several leading Kurdish politicians have joined a weeks-long hunger strike demanding an end to the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) who is currently serving a life sentence in prison.

The mayor of Diyarbakir, a predominantly Kurdish city in southeastern Turkey, said in a statement on Sunday that he had stopped eating. Five Kurdish members of parliament also said they are on hunger strike.

November 11/ Taksim witnessed a massive demonstration in support of hunger-strikers. They marched through Istiklal Street, had a sit-in at Taksim square for an hour. Thousands of people came together and Turkish police refrained from attacking on protestors.



### The Guardian

## the guardian

Will Erdogan do nothing to save the lives of Kurdish hunger strikers?

More than 700 of Turkey's citizens are risking death over their civil rights, yet their prime minister shows little concern. If you knew that more than 700 of your citizens might die soon, what would you do to stop it? That is the question that the Turkish government and Recep Tayyip Erdogan, faced with the massive hunger strike by Kurdish prisoners, now in its 58th day, need to answer.

But the answer so far seems to be "nothing". Very few in the west seem to be aware of the issue, with international media focused more on geopolitical concerns and the ongoing Syrian crisis. Yet they have a question of their own to answer: can Turkey still be held up as a role model for the Arab spring movement as it becomes more and more apparent that the Turkish government is apathetic towards the democratic rights and demands of its almost 20 million-strong Kurdish minority?

The hunger strikes started on 12 September with 65 prisoners. The official number has since reached 716, with claims from the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy party (BDP) that elected officials from the party might join the ranks if their demands continue to be ignored.

## **8- Messages from the prisoners in Hunger Strike**

### **Letter from Arrested MP, Mrs. Gülser YILDIRIM**

All Peoples of the World...

First of all, I salute with my whole heart the honorable people who have been sensitive towards this historical and critical protest that most of us have started as of September 12 2012, and who have been standing for us, understanding us and being a voice for us...



I am a Kurdish mother. Today, as thousands of people in prisons resisting to death, this historical mission has put on the shoulders of the sons and daughters of this people the heaviest burden. Being the mother and a comrade of one of these sons and daughters, I will stand with them to carry this burden till the end. This is a requirement of my moral, political, humane and conscientious position which determines my stance in life.

Those, who are thinking of repressing the representative forces of the people in order to silence them, should now realize that: If it were any other people who have suffered from the persecution Kurdish people have suffered for centuries now, they would have come to the threshold of insanity. But Kurdish People is still hanging on to its patient and calm attitude just as its geography. They have tried to silence this people by silencing us. They have tried every possible means to turn the Turkish people against us. In fact, we are representing the Turkish and Kurdish people at the same time. Because, we are voluntarily sacrificing ourselves in order to stop this war and we are facing those who applaud the mutual killings of Kurdish and Turkish children on the mountains everyday.

Those in power, who are insulting our values everyday in order to discredit us and to reduce us into nothingness, should not forget that the fate of us and our people is not under the monopoly of Erdoğan or AKP. History and the people have seen this hundred times.

I am the deputy of the people. I am a part of the people. Holding us here as captives, keeping us waiting, leaving us without initiative and acting as if we don't exist amount to an insult to the people of which we are the representative. If necessary, we would die in order to stop the bloodshed, to start the process of negotiation and dialogue. Because we are the sons and daughters of a tradition which dies for the sake of the love for a free and equal life.

If I am the deputy of this people, I am also a partner of their sorrow. Those who don't respect this people don't respect us either. Everyone is responsible from what is happening on this land. Being a human requires to be a fellow of all oppressed people. In the name of this requirement that we also went in the hunger strike. Here I would like to say one thing to those who conclude that we love death: That we are lying our bodies to death is for the sake of free days to come and a life that we love to death. Loving yourself and loving the life are



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the same thing. If you turn your back to the pain of the culture and people that have shaped your life invalidates all those forms of love.

Today is the sixteenth day of the hunger strike of the group that I'm in. We have never lost our hope and faith, and we will not. Today history is making us pay the price for people's having a freely and equal life. Avoiding this price destroys all humane, political and conscientious claims of us.

I am aware that the voice of a mother, who has three children, her family, her beloved comrades and all peoples of the world outside the prison, sounds thin today in this country. Putting aside my identity as a deputy; that I, as a human being, am facing the risk of eroding my body day by day is for the happy and free future of peoples whose devotion and suffering is unquestionable.

Some people keep telling the absurdity that hunger strikers have received an order from somewhere. I am telling this with my entire sincerity: We are searching for ways for convincing the old, sick, and the underage to stop the hunger strike. We have started the hunger strike entirely on our own will and we basically aim at opening up paths of dialog and resolution with the collective struggle of everyone. We are involved in this action in order to get our demands heard by the world. We demand the end to the oppression of our native language and re-inclusion of Abdullah Öcalan, who is the most important actor to stop the war, into the process as a political subject.

No one, including me, doesn't want to believe that death can be a remedy when all paths of life are closed. That is why, I say, hear us! Leave all your political prejudices aside and think as a far-sighted person in order to prevent deeper cliffs and wars among people. Taking our dead bodies from prisons will be the start of a division and disintegration that can never be reversed.

I am sending my love and bowing respectfully to those people who, as opposed to the silent majority, have become our voice to the best of their ability, small or big.

**Gülser YILDIRIM**  
**Imprisoned BDP Mardin Deputy**  
**Mardin E Type Closed Prison**

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#### **Letter from Gulan KILIÇOĞLU**

*Gulan Kiliçoğlu was a 4th year student at Ankara University, Faculty of Political Science Faculty when she was arrested under the pretext of the Union of Kurdish Communities (KCK), the alleged urban wing of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), operations and have been on an indefinite and un alternated hunger strike since September 12, 2012. She was arrested on April 1, 2012 and sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in prison for being a member of an illegal organization. Judge decided that it is against the course of the life for her to go to the Iraq's Kurdistan region capital, Erbil (Hewler) and conduct a research at Selahaddin University when sentencing her.*



#### **Gulan Kiliçoğlu's Letter from prison**

I have been in the Siirt Prison in Turkey since 2010. There are thousands of people in the prison now. Many of the prisoners are Kurds. I am a political prisoner. All of us wanted live in equality. In this way we can change the political choice that makes us free and free. We just want the freedom of choice, the freedom of language, the freedom of rights, the freedom of history which contains us the Kurdish people!

Now there are about 750 people on hunger strike, so am I. I have been on Hunger Strike since October 12. Our demands are about the rights of human beings.

The government of Turkey isolates Mr. Abdullah Ocalan from his society. Abdullah Ocalan is an important person. His warfare is about the equality of Kurds and most of Kurds have a faith in him. But now he is in the prison of Imrali and no one can learn about his situation. There is an international isolation, political isolation, You know isolation is a crime so;

- 1- Want government to change the conditions of Mr. Ocalan in a good way.
- 2- We want to speak our language – mother language- We are Kurds and we have been learning the Kurdish since our families but after the age of 7 we have to go to the school and the educational language is in Turkish. This is coercive for us. We want to speak our language in our schools.

We can't do anything free from Kurdish from Mr. Ocalan.

We are on a hunger strike since October 12, and our health is getting worse and worse. We want you to do something....

**Gulan Kilicoglu**

**E Type Woman Prison in Siirt**



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#### **Çağlar Demirel calls on people to stay united and stand up for their rights**

We publish the letter from Çağlar Demirel, jailed mayor of Derik, on hunger strike since 26 October 2012.

“Kurds have seen their rights usurped for years. Yet the People has never stepped back from struggling to reclaim their rights. Kurds, who never surrendered despite oppression and slaughter they witnessed, stand up proudly today, supporting their demands with a clear and principled struggle.



The AKP government does not stop using violence against those supporting the demands of Kurds and of Kurdish political prisoners. I know that the Kurdish people and the people of Mardin will reclaim their will and demands despite those attacks. Although we, Kurdish politicians, have a limited room to manoeuvre because we are in fact hostages in prison, our faith and spirit are high thanks to the the people who give us strength. In these days when our hunger striker comrades are struggling for life, I think that nobody should keep silence. History will not forgive those who turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the situation.

I call on all our people, women, youngsters, politicians, intellectuals, writers, artists and all the NGOs to lend an ear to this scream. I salute the women’s leading role in claiming our democratic rights as well as our people who are supporting these demands. On behalf of the Kurdish woman prisoners in Siirt Prison, I call on everyone to unite our voices for human dignity, by taking their share of responsibility and staying together to voice our demands.

#### **CALLS FROM SİNCAN PRISON**

**Yağmur Keskin:** “Physical needs are only survive. You should adopt what you believe for the existence. The reason of hunger strike is to adopt our beliefs.”

**Naime Encü:** “As it’s known the biggest dream of every prisoner is to run the way of freedom. However this dream of freedom, of course is going through the freedom of Ocalan. If a society’s leadership is not free none of society’s members can be free.”

**Berivan Elter:** “ It’s a betrayal to the time that the only architect of the current conditions of Kurdish people Mr Ocalan still remains in Imrali under the unaccepted conditions (total isolation). As members of the Kurdish struggle for freedom we will not allow the extension of this isolation. This is why we resist today and we will continue to oppose and resist.”



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**Ayşegül Ayaz:** “We won’t step back from resistance until Mr Ocalan is freed and our mother tongue is accepted. We are followers of Mazlums (freedom fighters). We know that we will crown this heritage with freedom.”

**Adile Dağal:** “Our action (hunger strike) will continue until our demands met.”

**Güler Özbay:** “The termination of the war is possible with the solutions that Mr Abdullah Ocalan offers who is the representative of millions. We want everyone to add their voice to our voice, their screams to our screams to leave a free future to the next generation.”