



News bulletin on occasion of the peace process

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1. PJAK: we express our support for Ocalan's message

Kurds in all parts of Kurdistan have impressively participated in Newroz celebrations. This year's celebrations for the Kurdish nation have consisted of historical messages about resistance, liberation struggle and peaceful stance. The peaceful proclamation of our leader, Abdullah Öcalan, as a beginning of a new phase of struggle, initiated a historic movement to the celebrations of this year's Newroz in northern Kurdistan (Kurdistan region of Turkey). Also Kurds in western Kurdistan (Kurdistan region of Syria) proclaimed their resistance and unity and expressed their commitment to reinforce their struggle and working for stabilizing their political status. Kurds in southern Kurdistan have expressed their supports to the struggles of Kurds in other parts of Kurdistan. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has banned Newroz celebrations in entire eastern Kurdistan (Kurdistan region of Iran), but Kurds in this part celebrated Newroz everywhere and largely participated in the celebrations. Kurds in eastern Kurdistan has shown their undefeatable stance against the Islamic Republic of Iran's suppressions policies, an attitude which is reflecting the spirit of Newroz.

The declaration of our leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in the magnificent celebration in Newroz in Amed, presented a new phase of Kurdish liberation struggles. Therefore this proclamation, which was addressed to all nations in the Middle East, has a significant influence on all other parts of Kurdistan, especially in eastern Kurdistan. The ongoing process is not only concerning Turkey, but also the entire Middle East. As The Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK), we express our support for this new phase.

As The Free Life Party of Kurdistan, we salute all Newroz celebration activities in all Kurdistan in general, and eastern Kurdistan in particular. We hope to witness the same attitude in all fields of struggles in this part of Kurdistan. This is the attitude we should resume against annihilation policy. Based on this, we call our nation in eastern Kurdistan to strengthen their unity and reach their liberation struggles to the point of highest development in order to achieve freedom and democracy. At the end, we again congratulate the New Year, Newroz and resistance struggles for freedom to our entire nation.

The Coordination of The Free Life Party of Kurdistan – PJAK 22.03.2013

Source: PJAK Official Website (pjak.eu/en) <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5542>

2. Kalkan: Withdrawal is not on the agenda now

ANF, Behdinan – Answering to journalist Cahit Mervan on Nuçe Tv on Friday evening, Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) Executive Council member Duran Kalkan said the withdrawal of guerrilla forces was out of question at present.

“Our forces are in ceasefire and self defense position, – Kalkan said – watching the progress made by the current process”. In response to the recently intensifying allegations on the withdrawal, Kalkan added, “The guerrillas took to the mountain and took up arms because they had a purpose and to struggle for their lives. Leader Apo demands freedom, the beginning of the solution process of the Kurdish question, recognition of the Kurdish identity and treatment of Kurds in a fair and

equal manner. It will be difficult to convince guerrilla forces to withdrawal unless they get an answer to these demands”.

Kalkan also pointed out that Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan should be put in direct contact with guerrillas to enable the withdrawal.

“Our guerrilla forces – said Kalkan – are maintaining their ceasefire position on the basis of the call Öcalan made on Newroz on 21 March and the subsequent instruction given by our Executive Council on the 23th. There has been no change or no new move since that date. Our forces are ready for any possibility”.

Kalkan stated that they were ready for withdrawal, on condition that the terms they put forward are fulfilled. Kalkan added that their forces could agree on withdrawal only if concrete steps are taken to meet their demands or if the Kurdish leader is directly involved in the process and convinces them to do it. “Nobody should expect the withdrawal to happen that easily – he warned – and criticized reports of an alleged withdrawal to happen soon and in an easy way”.

Source: Firat News Agency (en.firatajans.com) <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5702>

3. Karayılan: KCK needs direct contact with Öcalan

ANF, BEHDINAN – Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) Executive Council President Murat Karayılan and member Ronahî Serhad met representatives of worldwide press institutions in Behdinan on Thursday.

Answering questions on the ceasefire process, Karayılan said the Kurdish movement has announced ceasefire nine times since 1993. He pointed out that the KCK has yet not decided on withdrawal from Turkish borders and criticized the slow progress of their communication with the Kurdish leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in Imralı prison.

Karayılan underlined that KCK needed to be in touch with Öcalan to ensure a solution in the currently ongoing process of talks he is leading with the Turkish state.

Why not would a group of KCK members visit Imralı if needs be?, said Karayılan, adding, “Our movement wants to overcome the problem and we side with advancing the process, not leading it to a deadlock. However, it takes 15-20 days to get in touch with the leader, [referring to Öcalan], as all steps for the meetings and contacts with him require the permission of first the Ministry of Justice then of the Prime Ministry. This system makes the process advance very slowly. There is a need for a method like that used in the South African solution process. The isolation of the leader doesn’t allow a healthy communication and progress. A decision could be made more easily if the way followed in Mandela’s process is followed in Turkey as well”.

Source: Firat News Agency (en.firatajans.com) <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5695>

4. Karayılan: We are ready for war but we want peace

ANF — One of the main newspapers of Egypt “Egypt Independent” visited Qendil and had an interview with the leader of leading group of “Union of Communities in Kurdistan” (KCK) Murat Karayılan.

Editor-in-chief of the newspaper “Al-Sayid Abdulfatah” has done the interview and the summary of the interview was published in the newspaper today; the detailed interview will be published in coming days. In the interview he is pointing that PKK has announced cease fire against Turkey in response to the peace message of their leader “Ocalan”.

In the news it is mentioned that Karayılan is warning Turkey to positively deals with their leader “Abdullah Ocalan’s” peace process and prepare the requirements.

Karayılan in the interview is saying still we have doubt about the AKP’s will about the peace but we insist that the Turkish society want peace.

The newspaper pointing a saying of Karayılan which saying: “we know Turkey has crisis and need the peace, but we also know that AKP that has the government in Turkey will extend the peace process and cease fire without finding any true solution for the problem”.

Karayılan denying any sort of withdrawal of their forces and stressed still it is not the time for that; he also mentioned: “if during the cease fire our forces face any kind of attack, they have right of self-defense”.

Karayılan saying: “Right now we are in our most powerful situation and we are ready for war, but we want peace, we understood Turkey failed to destroy PKK by military operations during 35 years, that is why for co-existence of nations we ask them for keeping the peace, solving the Kurdish problem and democratization of Turkey are tightly related to each other.

Karaylan also criticizing Arab countries in relation to Kurdish cause and saying these countries are busy with their internal affairs and they keep their distance from important issues of the region. Meanwhile the newspaper from Karaylan is saying that PKK does not struggle only for Kurds and Kurdish cause, but their struggle is for democracy, freedom and peaceful life for all nations in the region.

Regarding the situation in Egypt Karaylan told the editor-in-chief of Egypt Independent that: “until now Egypt is in the stage of revolt and still it did not reach the stage of peace, the uprising is continuing and we hope the nation of Egypt achieve their goals of upraising and enter the new stage, accomplish their goals and demands which they started revolt for them”.

About the current system of Egypt also said: “we have not seen any positive or negative position from them in regard to situation of Kurds and regional issues”.

He also criticized the Muslim Brotherhood that trying to monopolize the power and said: “we were hoping that the new government after the revolt will be different but until now it has not happened”. At the end he asked the Egypt opposition to help each other for defending democracy, freedom and rights of nations and free life.

Source: Firat News Agency (so.firatajans.com)

Translated By: Rojhelat.info <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5672>

5. Bayik: Legal assurance needed for withdrawal

ANF, Behdinan – Speaking to Nuçe Tv on Monday, Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) Executive Council member Cemil Bayik said that ceasefire and withdrawal of guerrilla forces were part of a democratic political solution to the Kurdish question.

Bayik said that the message Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan gave on Newroz on 21 March needed to be understood and evaluated correctly, and noted that Öcalan’s message was a kind of referendum that has been agreed on by the Kurdish people. Bayik noted that in his message Öcalan asked the whole world if they asked for a democratic political solution to the Kurdish question and to the question of freedom and democracy in Kurdistan, Turkey and the Middle East.

Bayik criticized debates and statements that indicate the withdrawal of PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) forces as the solution of the issue. “The ceasefire and withdrawal of our forces – he said – will have a meaning only if they serve for the development of democratization in Turkey and the Middle East”.

Reminding of the previous guerrillas withdrawal in 1999 when guerrilla forces suffered attacks, deaths and arrests, Bayik pointed out that the withdrawal of guerillas will not take place unless the state ensures a legal ground for it. He warned that it was wrong and dangerous to defend that the withdrawal could be enabled by means of administrative measures. Noting that the Turkish parliament should also decide on the withdrawal and make a call for it, Bayik said that the present laws which authorize the Turkish army for operations against guerrilla forces needed to be changed to guarantee the withdrawal. Bayik evaluated the statements of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and some other AKP executives as an indication of their persistence on not coming up with a solution to the Kurdish question.

Bayik stated that the government should both take legal measures and establish a committee of wise people to prove their sincerity about finding a solution. He noted that this committee should be independent from all parties and circles and serve to arbitrate between the state and guerrilla forces. The committee should be made up of people who represent all circles and social groups in the society. Bayik noted that women should make up the majority of this committee to ensure an advancement in the process with their perspective siding with justice and peace against war and cruelty.

Bayik said the debates which put emphasis on the sensitivities of the Turkish side in this process were a consequence of the dominant mentality which refused to see Kurds as a people and to take their sensitivities into consideration. This approach is based on the exploitative mindset and the attitude of dominant nations on the oppressed, he said and added that the solution of the Kurdish question should be grounded on the recognition of the will of the Kurdish people.

“Kurds are ready to show solidarity, to listen to all circles and to exchange opinions but they refuse to agree on the solution that the AKP government imposes on them and their organization, the PKK. A solution cannot be achieved by means of threats, as we have experienced in the last 30 years. It requires dialogue, negotiation and mutual agreement”, he added.

Bayık noted that Kurdish leader Öcalan needed to be granted equal opportunities as the state so that the negotiations can take place on equal terms between both sides. He noted that the current process, in which Öcalan had to act alone and under unfavorable conditions, could not bring along a democratic solution. Bayık underlined that “In order to make a decision and exchange opinions on the process, Öcalan needs to hold talks with the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party), PKK, socialist and democratic circles, Alewis, Armenians, the oppressed and women who all face a problem of democracy and freedom and an obstacle to express themselves”.

Bayık pointed out that Öcalan aimed to come up with a solution to the Kurdish question in all parts of Kurdistan without affecting the borders. “Our previous paradigm had an intention of removing these borders on the basis of establishing a state by exercising the right to national self determination. However, our new paradigm, which is democratic confederalism, bases on the democratization of peoples in Turkey and the Middle East and coming up with a solution to their problem of freedom, equality and justice”.

Bayık warned that should the current process fail, this could lead to a dangerous time not only for PKK and north Kurdistan but also for all Kurds and the peoples in the region. “This is why it is necessary to lead the step for democratic liberation and construction of a free life to success” he added. Source: Firat News Agency (en.firatajans.com) <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5640>

6. ANDREW FINKEL: Kurdish New Year's Resolutions

ISTANBUL — Last Thursday was the start of the Kurdish New Year and, if all goes according to plan, the advent of a new era in Turkey's relationship with its own Kurdish population. In Diyarbakir, the largest city in southeastern Turkey, a few hundred thousand people converged to listen to a proclamation, read — first in Turkish, then in Kurdish — on behalf of Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned founder of the Kurdistan Workers Party, also known as P.K.K.

It was time, the message said, “for the guns to be silent and for ideas and statecraft to speak.” In short, Öcalan was calling for the end of an [armed insurrection](#) that has lasted almost three decades, killed some 40,000 people, cost Turkey hundreds of billions of dollars and stood in the way of [the country's ambition to be a regional powerhouse](#).

The occasion should have pleased Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He recently celebrated his [10th year in power](#), and this could well be the defining moment of his reign. Yet he was uncharacteristically sullen. While on a trip to the Netherlands, he called the rally in Diyarbakir — which he had helped orchestrate — a “[positive development](#)” but scolded the crowds for their lack of patriotism. Why, he asked, were they not waving Turkish flags?

The explanation for Erdoğan's flash of ill-humor, I think, is his realization that the peace process could still founder and his legacy go up in smoke. Having secured Öcalan's cooperation, the government is now less worried about persuading the P.K.K. to lay down arms than convincing mainstream Turkish public opinion that it will need to make concessions in return.

The government has portrayed the recent thaw as though the Kurds, now violence-weary, have suddenly come to their senses. Yet history is on their side. Thanks to oil wealth, the Kurds of northern Iraq have become an important trading partner, and the Kurds in Syria are exploiting the weakness of the regime in Damascus to solidify control over the northern region that borders Turkey. Turkish Kurds may no longer be asking for an independent Kurdistan, but they will be [reluctant to leave the negotiating table empty-handed](#).

For starters, Turkish law, which still equates Kurdish identity politics with abetting terrorism, will need to be amended. The joyful throngs in Diyarbakir last week were technically committing an offense by waving [the Kurdish flag](#) and banners of Öcalan.

Among the Kurds' most common demand is the right to use Kurdish as an official language in government offices and schools. Another is some form of political devolution. There's also the release of the 8,000 or so pro-Kurdish political activists held in pretrial detention under Turkey's sweeping antiterrorism laws. Finally, and most problematic, the P.K.K. is demanding the rehabilitation of its militants — including, if not actual freedom, then a lenient form of h These are compromises most Turks will find difficult to accept, particularly if they suspect that Erdoğan has made a deal with Öcalan in order to win the Kurds' support for his own political ambitions. His party's bylaws forbid him from running for prime minister again, but the presidency becomes vacant in 2014, and Erdoğan hopes before then to push through a constitutional reform that would give the job much greater powers. Just putting that proposition to a public referendum

requires the support of at least one opposition party — and now the [Peace and Democracy Party](#), a Kurdish nationalist party, looks like the most likely to oblige.

Given these stakes, small wonder Erdogan chided the Kurds of Diyarbakir last week. Or that he publicly burst out in anger in late February after a newspaper leaked minutes from meetings that Ocalan held in prison with some MPs according to which he urged P.K.K. militants to get with the program — including by supporting Erdogan's candidacy for president.

This is not the first time Erdogan has tried to resolve the Kurdish issue, but he knows it may well be his last. His main obstacle used to be resistance from the Kurdish side. Now, it's convincing his own constituents, whom he helped rear on a diet of "no surrender to terrorism," that compromise means peace, not defeat. Source: IHT Global Opinion (latitude.blogs.nytimes.com)

<http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5627>

7. Karayılan: Everybody should play their role for peace

Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) Executive Council president Murat Karayılan and member Ronahi Serhat answered journalists' questions on a program on Nuçe Tv on Wednesday.

We publish some parts of the interview.

How would you summarize the message of Öcalan's call which closely concerns all Kurds in four parts of Kurdistan as well as the countries in the Middle East region?

He proposes to develop a new line and a new perception in the region and this means the beginning of a new process. He grounds his proposal on a solution involving both Kurds and Turks, the two larger nations in the region, and the principle of a common life. His perspective which will also lead to the beginning of a new process in the Middle East aims to form a Confederation of Middle East Peoples in the process of time.

Which kind of responsibilities are to be undertaken by the sides involved in the process?

First of all it is important that this proposal is handled and understood fully by the Kurdish side, the Turkish government and the peoples in the region. The proposal by Öcalan is not a tactical but a strategical approach which requires a change in the general mentality. He proposes the replacement of the present division and conflict among peoples with peace and living together. His perspective will eliminate all policies on the Middle East where there currently exists a cruel conflict and bloodshed, mainly in Syria and Iraq, while on the other hand international powers are developing policies over these contradictions. It proposes shaping the Middle East by means of coming up with a solution to the Kurdish question and achieving peace among the peoples in Turkey. His perspective is as a matter of fact a kind of presentation of his long-standing philosophical understanding and it is the single frame that can enable Turkey to make a remarkable move for its existing problems.

What about the withdrawal of armed forces from Turkish territory? It is said that it is time for Kurds to give political struggle following the ending of armed struggle.

This plan involves three stages, the first of which is the ceasefire and withdrawal. As we have stated earlier, the Parliament should also fulfill its responsibilities while we are implementing ours. What we want is not a constitutional arrangement but the establishment of a parliamentary commission to make decisions on the peace process. The parliament's involvement in the process will also mean the involvement of people and political parties so that the present AKP-oriented narrow approach towards the process can be removed.

The solution process should also be based on legal ground in consideration of the fact that all steps that have been taken in the scope of talks so far are illegal according to Turkish laws, such as the BDP-DTK delegation's visit to Qendil and the state's delegation's meeting with Öcalan. Both processes of Imralı talks and withdrawal need to have a legal basis as this may otherwise be cause for a deadlock in the process.

The time of withdrawal is also related with the time of the government. Seasonal conditions are yet not proper for the withdrawal for which we have started preparations, but without a legal frame. There is a need for the establishment of a monitoring commission and a commission of wise people to answer a number of unanswered questions such as what will happen after the withdrawal and return to villages.

Can you detail the call Öcalan made to everyone for re-building of the law of brotherhood based on freedom and equality?

There is a need for a new constitution to guarantee democracy and equal rights for all peoples and

minorities in Turkey. This move requires a rooted change which will also come up with a solution to the Kurdish question and enable a constitutional form for the rights, organization and identity of peoples.

Source: Firat News Agency (en.firatajans.com) <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5622>

8. Harvey Morrisa: Kurdish Spring on Many Fronts

LONDON — [Abdullah Ocalan](#), the jailed leader of the Kurdish Workers Party, or P.K.K., called for a ceasefire Thursday in the three-decade war between P.K.K and the Turkish state, giving a new impetus to New Year celebrations by Kurds.

Hundreds of thousands of Kurds [gathered in the eastern Turkish city of Diyarbakir](#) to observe a holiday that they were long forbidden to celebrate publicly in Turkey.

In a message to pro-Kurdish legislators, Mr. Ocalan called for thousands of his fighters to withdraw from Turkish territory: “[We have reached the point where the guns must be silenced and where ideas must speak.](#)”

The truce marks the culmination of intensive [negotiations between Mr. Ocalan and Turkish officials](#) on ending a conflict that cost 40,000 lives.

The breakthrough will reverberate beyond Turkey’s borders to neighboring Syria, Iraq and Iran, all countries with large Kurdish minorities.

The [estimated 30 million Kurds](#) of the Middle East —official figures are deliberately vague — represent the largest nation in the world without a state of its own.

Although linguistically related to the Persians of Iran, which was also celebrating the pre-Islamic New Year [festival of Nowruz](#) on Thursday, the Kurds have maintained a distinctive culture that has survived centuries of division and repression.

Their fortunes have seen a sharp change in the past decade, with the war in Iraq, the Arab Spring and Syria’s descent into civil war.

Ten years ago this week, Kurds were fleeing to the mountains from the cities of northern Iraq in anticipation of attacks by the forces of Saddam Hussein following the U.S.-led invasion.

Kurdish forces held the line in the north on behalf of the international coalition after Turkey refused to join the invasion.

A decade on, an autonomous Kurdistan is now the most secure and prosperous region of Iraq and enjoys close relations with a formerly hostile Turkey.

In Syria, Kurdish forces, including those allied to the P.K.K., [have taken over territory](#) and frontiers abandoned by the retreating troops of the Damascus regime.

Fears of a Kurdish contagion have now spread to Iran, where the pro-Syrian Tehran regime is concerned that a P.K.K. peace agreement will not only strengthen Turkey’s hand in the region but might also encourage unrest among its own Kurdish population.

“A P.K.K. that suspends its operations in Turkey is most likely to support the armed struggle of the Iranian Kurds and fight against Iran, or to go to Syria to boost and consolidate the gains of the Kurdish people there,”[according to Bayram Sinkaya](#), writing for Turkey’s Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies.

For centuries, and before the creation of the modern Iranian, Turkish, Iraqi and Syrian states, rival powers used the Kurds to fight their wars with little benefit to the divided Kurdish nation.

In modern times, movements such as the P.K.K. have been used as proxies in conflicts between hostile neighboring states.

Analysts believe Turkey was prompted to make its own accommodation with a rebel movement it had failed to crush in response to the increasing influence within Syria of the P.K.K.-linked Democratic Union Party, or P.Y.D.

“The Kurdish issue is Turkey’s Achilles heel,” [Kadri Gursel](#) wrote at Al Monitor, which covers trends in the Middle East. “It is its bleeding wound and as long as it remains as such Ankara cannot maintain an ambitious policy that would mean challenging regional powers.”

The ultimate success of Turkey’s attempt to solve its Kurdish question will doubtless depend on its readiness to recognize the democratic and cultural rights of its Kurdish population.

Kurdish movements in the Middle East, including the P.K.K., have broadly abandoned the objective of creating a pan-Kurdish state, an aspiration that was denied to the Kurds in the post-World War I settlement imposed by the world powers.

They now seek broader autonomy and equal rights within the established borders of existing states.

The Turkish-Kurdish truce might bring them one step closer to that goal.

Within a changing Middle East, the Kurds might well discern a symbolic spark of freedom from the Nowruz bonfires they light on Thursday. Source: The Global Edition of The New York Times (rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com) <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5593>

9. Bayram Sinkaya: Why doesn't Iran want Turkey to solve its Kurdish issue?

For some time Turkey has been searching for ways to solve its Kurdish issue under the label of “the solution process.” Despite the optimism generated by this label, both the government and the Peace and Democracy Party [BDP] (along with other elements of parliament's Kurdish wing) have shown prudence. One reason for this cautious optimism is Ankara's concern that power brokers who do not want Turkey to solve this issue might sabotage the process. Many insist that no country in the region, or anywhere in the world for that matter, would like to see Turkey prosper after solving the Kurdish issue. Turkey's most frequently mentioned adversary is Iran.

For a while now it has been alleged that [Iran](#) is in alliance against Turkey with the PKK [Kurdistan Workers Party] — or at least with PKK leaders such as Cemil Bayik, who is said to be close to Iran. We remember how many listed Iran among the possible culprits of [the Paris murders](#). Is Iran really against Turkey resolving the Kurdish issue?

The first theory is a classic one, and posits that solving the Kurdish issue will empower Turkey. Therefore Iran, which sees Turkey as a regional rival, would not want it to gain more power by resolving the Kurdish issue.

But wouldn't a strong and prosperous neighbor that has solved this problem contribute positively to Iran as well? Isn't that why Iran backed Turkey's accession to the EU and its democratic openings? Stability, economic growth and peace in Turkey's east would certainly be felt in Iran's restive northwest, which has been living through similar problems for many years.

Another theory is that if Turkey makes progress in solving the Kurdish issue through democratic means, it might put the authoritarian Iranian government — which also has a significant Kurdish population — in a tough spot. Iranian Kurds who see Turkish Kurds making gains might well exert pressure to achieve the same rights. This is why Iran would not want Turkey to solve the Kurdish issue through democratic means, it is claimed. While there may well be some truth to this claim, one has to admit that Iran's Kurdish issue and the phase it has come to differ from what Turkey has experienced. For example, Iran supported the demands of Kurds in northern Iraq to form a federation, immediately recognized the [Kurdistan Regional Government](#) [KRG] without hesitation and quickly developed relations with the region.

Perhaps Iranian leaders won't be uncomfortable with Turkey solving its Kurdish issue but will rather worry about the Turkish approach to a solution. The “solution process” now means the withdrawal of about 4,000 PKK militants from Turkey. Where will these militants go with their guns? Northern Iraq, Iran and Syria are the places that first come to mind.

Another question that has to be answered is what these militants will be doing after they leave Turkey. Will they sit on a mountaintop waiting for the process to be completed? Certainly not. A PKK that suspends its operations in Turkey is most likely to support the armed struggle of the Iranian Kurds and fight against Iran, or to go to Syria to boost and consolidate the gains of the [Kurdish people](#) there.

The PKK fighters' withdrawal from Turkey with their guns will gain time for Turkey in the solution process. But Iranian officials have serious fears that the PKK will join with the Iranian Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) to focus on the struggle against Iran. Those fears may explain the recent wave of arrests of Iranian Kurdish politicians. It is reported that this wave of attacks is the most comprehensive since 2008. The fact that these arrests have come at the same time as [the solution process](#) in Turkey cannot be a coincidence.

In a nutshell, the solution process linked to the PKK'S withdrawal from Turkey is disturbing Iran. This is not because of Iran's concern with democratization or the empowerment of Turkey, but because of its worry that the PKK fire could ignite its territory.

Source: www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics By: Bayram Sinkaya

Translated from [ORSAM \(Turkey\)](#)

<http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5590>

10. Andrew Self: The Problem with Ocalan's Peace

This week, jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan made a historic call for the PKK to lay down their

arms and withdraw from Turkey. Politicians and scholars alike have greeted the unprecedented appeal as a critical and positive first step in ending the armed struggle that has plagued and defined Turkey's domestic and foreign policy for the last three decades. Most can agree that the announcement is not a definitive solution and instead a comprehensive constitutional change in Kurdish rights is still needed in order to address the underlying cause of the greater Kurdish movement. What the immediate ceasefire allows, however, is a window of opportunity for political maneuver. Erdogan and the AKP can only make progress towards solving the Kurdish issue politically and constitutionally under the political cover provided by the immediate peace deal. In this framework, Ocalan's call for the PKK to halt its attacks and withdraw from Turkish territory is extremely important. Similarly, the implications of the terms of his statement cannot be overlooked. The first point of Ocalan's appeal, a ceasefire, is rather straightforward. The PKK will cease attacks against Turkish military and civilian targets. In fact, this step involves no action on behalf of the PKK or the Turkish military, rather *inaction*. This is an important distinction to be made. The PKK is not being asked to sacrifice anything tangible like weapons capabilities, personnel, or any physical asset, only to temporarily cease operations. The second point of the call, the withdrawal, is a much more complicated issue at several levels. Here, it is important to define withdrawal in its military context. Politicians would be wise not to use the term without understanding its specific implication. NATO defines a withdrawal as a *planned retrograde operation in which a force in contact disengages from an enemy force and moves in a direction away from the enemy*. Note that this is fundamentally different from a defeat, surrender, or an end to a conflict. A PKK withdrawal is an operational maneuver, not a strategic outcome. The term itself carries no connotation of success or failure. In fact, a withdrawal simply sacrifices space for time. In a nonlinear conflict like the one the PKK and Turkish military are engaged in, the concept of space is not of significant tactical importance, especially when the PKK's logistical and leadership base in northern Iraq is not being threatened.

Furthermore, from a military standpoint, a PKK withdrawal raises serious questions regarding exactly how to carry out such an operation. Nowhere has it been articulated just how the Turkish government or the PKK will measure the withdrawal. At what point can the PKK be considered to be withdrawn? Is it when every single armed Kurd leaves the country? This would be an extremely ambitious goal given the fact that the PKK is a popular insurgency, not a conventional military unit. Perhaps this argument is a straw man, but even a withdrawal of a fraction of the PKK is nearly impossible to determine. After all, at what point does a PKK member become a Kurdish civilian? When they disarm? Ocalan has yet to call on Kurds to disarm. Even if he did, how would Turkey enforce such a monumental task? Who would oversee it? The Turkish military? If Ankara intends to see every AK-47 collected from Turkey's Southeast, then I wish them luck. These tactical and operational-level definitions may seem trivial, as the strategic-level debate over greater Kurdish rights is the key issue of the matter. However, the parties involved must realize that definitions of operational terms have serious implications. True, a ceasefire and a withdrawal will not solve Turkey's Kurdish problem, but they are a necessary first step, and a first step that needs to be defined and understood.

For these reasons, it is likely that the PKK will not withdraw and will not disarm, at least in the sense that Turks would hope from a comprehensive peace agreement. In fact, on Friday, Murat Karayilan, the leader of the PKK in northern Iraq in Ocalan's stead, ordered the PKK to halt their attacks but made no mention of a withdrawal. Why would he? The Turkish government has no coercive capacity with which to enforce the terms of their own peace deal without spoiling it themselves. As the peace deal currently stands, the PKK reserves its position of strength in these negotiations. If the Turkish government fails to enact substantial democratic and cultural reforms, the PKK reserves its ability to restart the conflict, having tactically sacrificed nothing in the process. Observers must not confuse a ceasefire or a withdrawal with a neutralized PKK threat. The organization will remain a deadly force, perched on Turkey's border with an undiminished capacity to reignite the insurgency if the evolving political struggle fails.

Source: www.huffingtonpost.com <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5587>

11. Cengiz Çandar: A Newroz vision for Turkish-Kurdish relations

What was read out yesterday was a declaration of peace and unity for Mesopotamia, Kurdistan and Anatolia. I listened to the "historic" declaration expected from Abdullah Ocalan on a live

transmission from NTV. Everything was momentous yesterday [March 21]. All leading Turkish television channels were transmitting the Nowruz celebrations in Diyarbakir of more than a million people with PKK flags and posters of [Abdullah Ocalan](#) live for several hours.

The declaration from Imrali of the man sentenced to life in prison was read out first in Kurdish and then in Turkish by two parliamentarians. This was at the top of the news in national and international news channels until midnight, ushering in a truly “historic Nowruz.”

Ocalan’s declaration made a mockery of all the speculations, leaked news and comments of recent days. To make sure that the declaration was indeed consequential, I had a look at ANF, the Kurdish news agency, reading its Kurdish version, which read: “Ocalan: A new era is beginning.” The subtitle was the part Ocalan emphasized, “The time has come for democratic politics.”

It was important to understand how a vast political movement, especially its armed wing, assessed the declaration and which aspect of the declaration it saw as being the most significant. The movement’s members interpreted Ocalan’s remarks on the “beginning of a new era” as signaling “the beginning of a democratic political era.” It is true that what made this declaration “extraordinary” was the part that expressed “the end of one era and start of a new one.”

The phrases “Today, a new era is beginning” and, “a door is opening from the process of armed resistance to the democratic political process,” marked the [end of an era](#) and the beginning of another one.

He defined the “new era” with stronger emphasis: “Guns must be silent now. We are at the point where we will let ideas and policies speak out. Witnessed by millions who heard my appeal, I am saying that a new era is starting; not weapons but politics are now at the fore. We have commenced a phase of armed elements withdrawing beyond the border.”

What we have to understand from these words is that Ocalan has concluded that “the underlying reasons of armed struggle the PKK has been carrying out in Turkey no longer exist. From now on, demands will be expressed through democratic politics.” It is in this way that he is closing one historic era for the PKK and the Kurds and is opening a new one.

One can find a more poetic elaboration of this point in the parts where he addressed the Kurds and the Turks:

“For Kurds, the Tigris and Euphrates are the brothers of Sakarya and Meric [major rivers in western Turkey]. The Agri and Cudi mountains are friends of Kackar and Erciyes [mountains in central Turkey]. *Halay* and *delilo* [Kurdish folk dances] are relatives of *horon* and *zeybek* [Turkish folk dances]. Turkish people who have been living in Anatolia from time immemorial should know that their coexistence with Kurds under the colors of Islam for about thousand years has been founded on brotherhood and solidarity. Turks and Kurds who were martyred at [Canakkale \[Gallipoli\]](#), fought together in the War of Liberation and established the 1920 Assembly together.”

When read carefully, Ocalan in his declaration that closed the doors on “an independent Kurdistan or a Kurdish nation-state” also sets out his objection to a “Turk nation-state”:

“This is not an end but a new beginning. This is not giving up the struggle but launching a different struggle. To opt for an ethnic and single national entity is a non-human approach that denies our origins and soul. To put together a democratic country where all peoples and cultures are equal and free that befits the history of Kurdistan and Anatolia is our common responsibility. On the occasion of this Nowruz I am calling on Armenians, Turkmens, and Assyrians, Arabs and others as much as the Kurds to see the light of freedom and equality for themselves from the fires burning today.”

Looking from this perspective, what was heard at Diyarbakir yesterday and witnessed by millions could well be called “a declaration of [peace](#) and unity for Mesopotamia-Kurdistan-Anatolia.”

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan responded to the declaration by saying, “I find the appeal and invitation positive. The messages at Diyarbakir match our messages,” but he also expressed a reservation: “Of course, what is important is their application.”

Was there any missing element in Ocalan’s long-awaited declaration? Yes, there was. He did not give a timeline, a calendar or indication of a method for “withdrawal beyond the borders” that was marked by the prime minister as vital and “evidence of the beginning of the process.” He did not once utter the words “cease-fire” and “non-hostility.”

In a nutshell, all these monthlong speculations, including mine, were left hanging. Is it conceivable that the date of withdrawal, its calendar and its methods were not discussed in the months long discussions at Imrali? Certainly not.

Then what? This either means that Ocalan and the government have not agreed on a timeline, calendar and method or Ocalan and his organization, especially Kandil [military command] have not reached a detailed accord on scheduling and methods. Perhaps Ocalan is “holding his cards close to his chest” and not showing his hand. This will have to be dealt with in the negotiations process. He may wish to see the steps the state and the government will take.

I also noted that in his declaration he did not use the past tense by saying “An era is finished, and a new one begins.” It may be significant that he chose to say, “A new era is beginning, a new page is opening.”

So? We are only at the very beginning, and there is a long and tough road ahead. Perhaps the biggest banner in Diyarbakir unconsciously reflected this reality. It said: “No peace unless the leader is free.”

What is clear is that as of yesterday we will be searching for a solution through dialogue and negotiations in an environment where the guns are silent.

Just think, a couple of months ago we could not even dream that Newroz 2013 would be celebrated like this in Diyarbakir.

Source: www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics

By: Cengiz Çandar. Translated from Radikal (Turkey)

<http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5568>

12. Jihad el-Zein: No matter where the rains fall in our region these days, the bloom is always Kurdish

No matter where the rains fall in our region these days, the bloom is always Kurdish. In the Kurds’ view, be they elites or commoners, this political era is theirs — an era that would see the redressing of 90 years of injustices perpetrated against them since after the First World War. Here, then, is the Kurdish view of the situation in the region on this new-year celebration of **Nowruz** today.

In the last decade, the first truly independent Kurdish state in modern times was established under the formula of a “federal region” within the Iraqi state. Yet, if it weren’t for the region’s share of the central government’s oil, nothing would remain of this formula, except nominal ties marred by a relation of daily confrontations.

During the two years since the Syrian revolution erupted, Syrian Kurds in the extreme north and northeastern parts of the country have enjoyed self-rule in their areas, which extend discontinuously over hundreds of kilometers from Afrin to al-Qamishli along the border with Turkey. The term “Western Kurdistan” was even created during the Syrian revolution to describe these regions, which possess historical roots dissimilar to those of Kurdish areas in Northern Iraq. This is because a large portion of their inhabitants came from Turkey and took refuge there after World War I to escape the Kurdish-Turkish clashes that erupted in the first decade following the establishment of Kamal Atatürk’s republic.

Throughout the revolution, and despite the fact that control over Kurdish areas fell mostly to the Democratic Union Party — which does not agree, and even clashes, with the Free Syrian Army militias, especially the Islamic fundamentalist factions among them — the Syrian revolutionary leadership committees established abroad were always keen to give precedence to Kurdish individuals. This led to the appointment of Abdulbaset Sieda as head of the Syrian National Council and then **Ghassan Hitto** as head of the interim government for the liberated areas. It is also well known that many disagreements erupted within the opposition’s institutions between Arabs and Kurds concerning the future identity of Syria and its regime.

But the happiest development, which might turn out to be the most important event for Kurds in the region, is the ongoing transformation in the relationship between the leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), the imprisoned Abdullah Ocalan, and the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey, headed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Information in the Turkish press confirms that an agreement has been reached between Ocalan and Ankara, following negotiations started by members of the Kurdish bloc in Turkey’s parliament with officials from the country’s intelligence services, concerning a series of unprecedented steps to establish peace between the two sides, especially in southeastern Turkey. The whole of Turkey is now waiting for Ocalan to address his party’s **fighters**, instructing them to withdraw beyond Turkey’s borders (to the Kandil Mountains in Northern Iraq) on the occasion of the Kurdish Nowruz celebration on March 21, in return for Ankara’s consent to a series of steps that would strengthen the democratic gains achieved by Turkish Kurds on the political and cultural fronts. This would

hinge on the condition that the PKK abandons its secessionist agenda.

This bold step by Erdogan would undoubtedly not have occurred — or hastened — had the situation in Syria not changed two years ago. It is true that Kurdish political and military pressure inside Turkey has a long history. It is also true that Erdogan strives to amend the constitution and instill a presidential system of governance with him as president. However, the situation that has arisen on the Turkish-Syrian border after March 17, 2011, pushed Erdogan, after much hesitation, into going further and implementing bolder steps in his negotiations with Ocalan. For Erdogan, two years ago, had gone so far as to adopt a hardline discourse against the armed Kurdish insurrection, similar to that espoused by extremist Turkish nationals against any form of recognition of a distinctive Kurdish political identity in Turkey.

The Syrian crisis has revealed, and the Turkish leader has discovered, that Turkey's border with Syria — from Aleppo's countryside to al-Qamishli (approximately 500 kilometers long) — is, in large part, Kurdish.

The practical experience gained on the ground during the last two years, and Erdogan's orders to Turkish intelligence services to systematically take charge of the border region with Syria and help Syrian opposition forces spread their control over those regions or even "surrender" them to the opposition on the Syrian side, have made the Turkish president realize that his support of the Syrian revolution against the regime has given Turkish Kurds — and the PKK specifically — a source of backing and a demographic, political and military depth that he had not expected.

This means that Turkey, as it entered into this wide-ranging international and regional operation to curb Iranian influence over Damascus, not only found itself suddenly at loggerheads with the Russians and their decision to back the Syrian regime, but was also surprised by the negative developments taking place on its border. Ankara was worried about the growing possibility that a Western Kurdistan be established, affording the PKK fighters a safe haven at a time when Turkey sought to establish a buffer zone on its northern border with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime. These developments manifested themselves through a dangerous escalation of armed Kurdish attacks inside Turkey, despite the fact that, in theory at least, the guerillas originated in Northern Iraq.

Through experience, Erdogan understood that preventing his policies toward Syria from mutating into a strategic burden for Turkey — in this, its most worrisome of internal affairs — requires that unprecedented initiatives be undertaken in his negotiations with prisoner Ocalan.

Turkey still awaits the results of this negotiating experiment between its strong government and the Kurds, which echoes the courageous decision that former French president Charles De Gaulle took to negotiate with the Algerian National Liberation Front after 1958. These negotiations led to very difficult times internally for France, culminating in a series of attempted coups d'état by extremist French colonial officers who were backed by a portion of French society unable to digest the idea of Algerian independence.

The fundamental difference in the Turkish case is that the reconciliation project completely precludes any secessionist proclivities by the Kurds, despite the fact that it remains unclear what agreements were reached pertaining to the manner by which the Turkish state's Kurdish areas would be ruled.

The agreement is still in its infancy, yet its first victims were the female Kurdish leaders in Paris a short while ago. Nationalist Turkish factions, represented in parliament and the (politically impotent) army, are still observing the events unfold, and we still don't have any indications as to the depth of the agreement. Thus, we cannot anticipate any final reactions to it; except to say that they range from caution (the Republican People's Party) to rejection among hardline nationalists (the Nationalist Movement Party).

Turkey's labor pains just started, but current events seem to indicate that the ensuing birth will be to the Kurds' liking and will fulfill the nationalist interests that they aspire to.

As a result, the Kurdish elite finds itself needing to contend with the following issues:

The Kurds' critics could claim that Kurdish aspirations can only be fulfilled at the expense of the "disintegration" of other nations, specifically Iraq and Syria. This means that, since their inception in 1920, Kurdish nationalist movements have always been reliant upon the need to dismantle the region's countries.

In response, the Kurds could say that it was no accident that their political and economic rise

occurred in the era of democratic changes in the Arab world, which means that the oppressive ruling regimes were responsible for Arab repression against them.

Both views are correct! Congratulations to the Kurds and Iranians on the occasion of Nowruz today, and condolences — on **Mother's Day** — to all the grieving mothers of the victims of this upswell in nationalist, democratic, Arab, Kurdish, Turkish and Iranian sentiments.

The region has long exploited the Kurds. Now, their time has come to return the favor.

Source: www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics

By: Jihad el-Zein Translated from *An-Nahar* (Lebanon) <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5555>

13. Cengiz Çandar: Ocalan's message is much more than a ceasefire

Newroz, known as the Iranian New Year in the western world, is the beginning of the new year for some central Asia and Balkan countries, as well as the Kurds. On March 21, 2013, Newroz became more than the beginning of the new year for the Kurds. In Turkey, it was perceived as the beginning of a new era not only for the Kurds but also for Turkey and the entire Middle East.

Newroz was celebrated with **unprecedented euphoria** by nearly two million people in Diyarbakir (Amed), the center of southeastern Turkish — revelers danced in the streets adorned in yellow, green and red, the Kurdish national colors.

The difference between this year's and previous Newroz celebrations was the expectation to hear a **letter by Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan** read out in two languages that everyone believed would be "historic." He was expected to declare a "farewell to arms" and withdrawal of PKK's military forces from Turkey.

That would effectively end what was described as a 30-year low-intensity war by a former Turkish Chief of General Staff. According to official lexicon of Turkey, terror would thus come to an end. On March 21, life stopped in Turkey at 1 p.m. [11 a.m. GMT] when two parliamentarians of the pro-Kurdish **Peace and Democracy Party [BDP]** began reading out Ocalan's message. The Kurdish version was read by a female parliamentarian and the Turkish one by a popular ethnic-Turk whose true profession is film directing. At that moment, the vast number of television news channels began live transmissions. Events we could not have dreamt about three months ago were taking place in front of our eyes.

Ocalan, in his brief "historic" letter, did not even once use the words "cease-fire," "truce" or "cessation of hostilities." His text was deeply philosophical. The letter was of an intellectual nature that would not really be congruous with labels affixed to **Ocalan** in Turkish official lexicon, such as "head separatist," "terrorist chieftain" or "baby killer."

The next day, Turkish mainstream press reported Ocalan's message with headlines such as "A Declaration of Farewell to Arms." Among them, the tabloid *Radikal* placed the Kurdish headline "Biji Turkey" [Long Live Turkey] with a photograph of tens of thousands celebrating Newroz at the Diyarbakir square.

Foreign press opted for a shortcut interpretation implying that Ocalan's message was a declaration of a "cease-fire."

Pro-PKK Kurdish-language daily *Azadiye Welat* [Free Country] interpreted Ocalan's message as "Manifestoya Azadiye" [Manifesto of Freedom] and used those two words as a banner headline for a photograph of the crowd in Diyarbakir (Amed).

But it was definitely not a "cease-fire declaration." Since 1993, the PKK has declared unilateral cease-fires many times. Neither was this one of them nor will it be the last. The dramatic juncture we reached on March 21, 2013, is far beyond a "cease-fire declaration" similar to previous ones declared by Ocalan. To define what has transpired as "cease-fire" would be an understatement. Or was it rather an "armistice" as claimed by some media outlets? No, it wasn't that either. The most appropriate definition would be "a call for cessation of hostilities," but Ocalan's assessment and appeal is far ahead of even that.

The Kurdish leader set out from a paradigm shift. Accordingly, he emphasized that the Kurds have acquired their identities and true selves as a result of the PKK struggle, and as such there is no more need to pursue an armed struggle against Turkey and it is time to move the struggle to democratic politics.

The motto of his appeal could be interpreted as "letting the weapons fall silent and allowing ideas and policies to speak out."

One of the points he underlined was that the solution would be achieved by preserving Turkey's

territorial integrity, within the country but without a nation-state model. This was his way of saying that there will not be an “independent Kurdish state” through secession or dismemberment of the existing country or by partition. By saying that, he also rejected any country or state based on a “single nation,” including that of Turkey.

He described the current borders of the Middle East as superficial borders that at one point in history splintered the Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Persians and other peoples. He talked about “unity” and “partnership” and defined the Turks and the Kurds as “two strategic powers” in the Middle East. The entire spirit of the message was based on ending the “fight” and “conflict” between the Turkish state and the Kurds and unifying their forces. For this, above all, guns have to be silent. That is, a “cease-fire” will be the logical outcome of the road Ocalan will take with the Erdogan government. But it is not the end of the road. It is a logical starting point. Departure of armed PKK militants from Turkey beyond borders will then follow. Ocalan did not mention a timetable or its method, but simply stated a principle. He said, “Witnessed by millions listening to my appeal, I say that a new era has started. Politics and not guns will be in the forefront. We are at the phase of withdrawing our armed elements to beyond the border.”

He did not say how and when this will be done. This obviously will be settled through negotiations. There are also steps the government has to take, such as drafting a new constitution that will eliminate the ethnic definition of citizenship, [releasing thousands of Kurdish politicians from prison](#) and writing laws that allows cases against them to be dropped.

All these are mutual steps to be taken over time. The end of the process will mean full democratization of Turkey and Turkish emergence in the Middle East and international political arena as a democratic center where Turks and Kurds have become one.

Ocalan evaded potentially polarizing issues such as whether the Kurds will achieve their status in a federal structure or in an autonomous region. An increasing number of people in Turkey are aware that Ocalan’s design for the future, which could be described as constructive ambiguity, will empower the prime minister who further enabled the process while the accomplishment of the ongoing process depends on Erdogan’s success.

This is why it seems Erdogan and Ocalan have become two odd partners whose fates fused. And, both are clinching to Turkey’s fate. Given that the Kurds have stepped onto a new historical stage as formidable new actors in the wake of the developments in Iraq and now Syria, perhaps the fate of the whole region is being sealed.

Such was the implication of Ocalan message on Newroz, March 21, 2013 — it was much more than a ceasefire.

He clearly stated: “Today we are waking up to a new Turkey, a new Middle East and a new future ...”

Source: www.al-monitor.com <http://rojhelat.info/en/?p=5550>