**Kurdistan Democratic Communities Union (KCK)**

**TO OUR PEOPLES AND DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC OPINION!**

*9 October 2013*

The Kurdish question emerged as a result of the Turkish state's policy of Turkification through its denial of the Kurds' existence and subjecting them to cultural genocide. All the Kurds' objections to this policy have been violently crushed. Once the Kurds had been silenced and reduced to a state where they could not protest, the cultural genocide was accelerated using economic, social and cultural policies. By the 1970s the Kurds had been left with no option but to become Turkish in order to perpetuate their lives. A political, social, economic, cultural and psychological environment had been created that drove Kurds away from Kurdishness, putting it on the path to extinction.

The PKK emerged on the historical stage as a revolt and force of struggle against this policy of cultural genocide that brought the Kurds face to face with oblivion. The Kurdish people, in particular the youth, soon welcomed the PKK as a force that would rescue them from the cultural genocide of colonialism. They saw that the PKK's practice was consistent with its pronouncements and began to gather around it. Prior to 12 September a movement with thousands of members and hundreds of thousands of supporters had emerged. As the influence on society of the traditional local authority which collaborated with the state was undermined, the prestige of the PKK amongst the people increased.

The colonialist forces seeing the Revolutionary democratic movement in Turkey, in particular the rise of the liberation struggle in Kurdistan under the leadership of the PKK, as their end, carried out the fascist military coup of 12 September 1980. With this military coup they wanted to stamp out the PKK and bury the freedom hopes of the Kurdish people once and for all. They did not just throw PKK members and supporters in jail, they also turned the whole of Kurdistan into a prison. While PKK members resisted oppression in prison, the PKK leadership and cadres waged a struggle to create an organisation that would resist in all conditions in the Middle East. As a combination of these factors the guerrilla struggle was launched on 15 August 1984. Described at the outset as 3 or 4 bandits the freedom guerrillas of Kurdistan defeated all efforts to destroy them with the support of the people. At the beginning of the 1990s the guerrilla struggle created popular uprisings described as a revolutionary resurgence. The unification of the guerrilla movement and the popular uprisings created an invincible liberation movement.

The development of the guerrillas and the popular uprisings developed national and political consciousness amongst the people of Kurdistan. It also put the Kurdish question on the agenda in Turkey, as it became impossible to ignore the Kurdish reality and the demands of the people. Consequently, the Kurdish question began to be discussed by intellectuals, society and politicians in Turkey.

Once the Kurdish reality and demands had been made irrefutable leader Apo opted for a solution of the question of freedom and democracy for the Kurds within the borders of Turkey. From 1988 onwards he called on Turkey to resolve problems through dialogue and political methods. In 1993 President Turgut Ozal, having realised the Kurdish question could not be resolved by military means, sent a message to the Kurdish people's leader, stating that if a ceasefire were declared he would seek a solution through political means. Hence leader Apo announced a unilateral ceasefire in March 1993 in order to give an opportunity for a political solution.

However, when Turgut Ozal, who had sent the message to Leader Apo and wished to seek a political solution, was murdered by forces within the state opposed to a solution, this initiative of Leader Apo was foiled. Following the murder of Turgut Ozal years of violent conflict ensued.

In December 1995 Leader Apo again declared a unilateral ceasefire on receiving a message from Necmettin Erbakan after the Refah Party had joined the ruling coalition. However, this ceasefire was short-lived on account of the state continuing its military operations. Replies were sent to Erbakan's messages in those years to the effect that if steps were taken they would be reciprocated, but the deep state removed Erbakan with the memorandum of 28 February 1997 [also known as the 'post-modern coup']. Although the Turkish state sent messages via various mediators in 1997 and 1998, it became clear with the plot of 9 October 1998 that these were efforts to divert and gain time in order to liquidate the Liberation Movement.

Leader Apo made constant calls for a democratic solution to be put on the agenda at that time, against those forces within the state that were insistent on a policy of denial and destruction regarding the Kurdish question. His speech of 1 September 1998 and the ceasefire declared are the most concrete expression of this. If this speech is examined it will be seen how strong Leader Apo's wish for a democratic solution was at that time. However, the response to the 1 September ceasefire was a plot.

International forces and their collaborators in Turkey rejected Leader Apo's policy of resolution and continued their conspiracy to the extent of capturing Leader Apo. However, Leader Apo, seeing that this conspiracy was a trap for the Kurdish, Turkish, Persian, Arab and all the peoples of the region, saw it as his responsibility to the peoples to foil this plot. On 2 August 1999, from Imrali where he was incarcerated, he extended the ceasefire declaration of 1 September 1998 to deciding to withdraw the guerrillas beyond the borders of Turkey. In this way he offered a significant opportunity to the Turkish state to resolve the Kurdish question, but the Turkish state interpreted the withdrawal as weakness and maintained their policy of cultural genocide. Considering it would be able to liquidate the PKK it took no steps towards a resolution of the Kurdish question.

Following the insistence on cultural genocide and the failure to take any steps the Kurdish Liberation Movement halted the withdrawal of guerrillas and launched a new period of guerrilla struggle on 1 June 2004. Despite the PKK's warnings, virtually imploring the AKP government that had come to power in November 2002, there had been absolutely no response. The party's leader, Tayyip Erdogan, had even made clear that he would continue the classic policies of denial, annihilation and cultural genocide, saying: 'If you don't think about it, then there will be no Kurdish problem'.

The move of 1 June 2004 demonstrated that the PKK had not, contrary to the opinions of the state and the AKP government, been weakened. Although the AKP endeavoured to create division in the Kurdish Liberation Movement by using certain Kurdish politicians, these initiatives, like the provocative initiatives within the PKK, came to naught. The AKP government came under increasing pressure from the guerrilla struggle and popular uprisings. Although the Kurdish Liberation Movement declared a short ceasefire in 2005 the AKP government did not respond in practical terms.

The AKP government, feeling it would not be able to survive under pressure from guerrilla resistance and popular uprisings in 2006, sent mediators calling for a ceasefire. The Kurdish People's Leader therefore called for a ceasefire to be declared on 1 October 2006, thinking certain steps would be taken. However, no positive steps were taken, and attempts were made by deep forces within the state to poison the Kurdish people's leader. In May 2007 the AKP government, realising it would not be able to maintain its policy of managing both the PKK and the military-civilian bureaucracy, came to an agreement with the chief of the General Staff, Yasar Buyukanit, with the Dolmabahce protocol for the liquidation of the PKK. With this accord the AKP and political Islam became incorporated within the state.

Following the re-election of the AKP on 22 July 2007 the external base of the liquidation concept was established by a meeting between Erdogan and Bush on 5 November. When the 2008 Zap operation failed to achieve results a new concept to liquidate the PKK was adopted by the AKP government and the military-civil bureaucracy. According to this concept agreed between Ilker Basbug and PM Erdogan a certain relaxation would be made in the culture and language arena. Hence certain developments, such as the launch of a Kurdish language TV channel, came onto the agenda prior to the local elections of 29 March 2009.

This process was at the same time the period in which the Oslo talks took place, during which a situation of non-conflict was ensured. Apart from retaliation to military operations guerrilla actions were kept to a minimum. Prior to the 29 March local elections the state also openly complied with the environment of non-conflict.

The Kurdish democratic movement achieved great success in the local elections. Following this success the KCK, thinking this success would open the way to a democratic solution, announced on 13 April that the environment of non-conflict would continue. In response to this the state, realising it would not be able to impose its new Kurdish policy on the existing Kurdish democratic environment, arrested hundreds of Kurdish politicians, including elected mayors, branch and provincial administrators the next day, 14 April, and threw them in prison. Despite this the Kurdish Liberation Movement maintained its position of non-conflict and Leader Apo drew up a new roadmap for a resolution. When the state did not respond positively he sent Peace Groups to Turkey to clarify the state's intentions and policies. The state's response was to step up its arrests and military operations.

At the end of May 2010 the state of non-conflict ended on account of the state's policies and clashes and tension intensified. Prior to the referendum of September 2010 the AKP government asked Leader Apo to call a halt, and our movement responded to Leader Apo's request by declaring a ceasefire on 13 August 2010. The AKP government thus won its referendum of 12 September. However, the government did not keep its promises and stepped up arrests and military operations. In spite of this Leader Apo requested our movement to maintain its ceasefire until the general elections of 12 June 2011. Within the framework of the Oslo talks in 2011 Leader Apo prepared three protocols and submitted them to the government. However, the government neither responded positively to these proposals nor improved the conditions of Leader Apo in order that he participate in efforts towards a resolution.

In response to this the DTK took a decision to construct the Kurds' democracy and freedom by declaring democratic autonomy on 14 July 2011. The AKP government reacted angrily to this declaration and used the guerrillas' response to military operations on the same day as justification for further stepping up its campaign of arrests and military operations. The resulting clashes which continued until autumn 2012 were the most intense period of warfare in the history of the guerrilla resistance.

Encouraged by certain internal and external forces, the AKP government believed it could destroy the Kurdish Freedom Movement by means of intensified warfare. However, it was the Turkish army and AKP government that was hard pressed by the intense conflict. The AKP government, realising that it would lose power in the event of the conflict continuing into 2013, send delegations to Imrali requesting a truce. Leader Apo, thinking the AKP government and state had realised the Kurdish question could not be resolved by military means, and in order to provide an opportunity for a democratic resolution to the Kurdish question and democratisation in Turkey asked the guerrillas to move to a position of non-conflict. On 21 March he presented a manifesto for democratisation aiming for democratisation in Turkey and a resolution to the Kurdish question. This manifesto, which excited all peoples and forces and was greeted with great hope and enthusiasm, also took its place in history as a project containing solutions for all the problems of the Middle East.

In the manifesto of 21 March the withdrawal of guerrillas was included along with the state of non-conflict. The Kurdish Freedom Movement demonstrated its faith in the project and its intent by ensuring non-conflict, releasing prisoners and starting the process of withdrawing the guerrillas from within Turkey's borders. Despite the Kurdish Freedom Movement implementing its approach towards a democratic resolution through political means by fulfilling its responsibility at both stages, the AKP, as the state power that created the Kurdish question, has taken absolutely no steps. Nowhere in the world in such questions has there been a situation where one side to the issue has taken such an attitude. Leader Apo has wished to be exemplary by taking the necessary steps for a resolution of questions in Turkey and the Middle East based on the fraternity of peoples.

Just as absolutely no steps have been taken in order to bring about the environment for ideas, ideology and democratic political struggle emphasised by Leader Apo in his manifesto, he has also, as the initiating party of this process, not been provided with the facilities to conduct it successfully. Despite captured soldiers being released, even prison inmates with terminal illnesses have not been released, but condemned to die one by one. Thousands of political prisoners and dozens of journalists and lawyer continue to be held on remand in prison.

Despite Leader Apo initiating the process of guerrilla withdrawal no mechanism has been established to monitor the ceasefire, withdrawal or reciprocal steps that need to be taken. There have been deliberate efforts to avoid official recognition of these talks and the steps taken by the Kurdish Freedom Movement. Just as there has been no mention of the word Kurd in any of the steps supposedly taken, there is also an evident desire that nothing concerning the Kurdish question will be clear or lawful. The Wise Persons' Commission established by the government has not met Leader Apo.

The situation of non-conflict, the release of soldiers and the withdrawal of guerrillas has been rendered meaningless. These important steps have been received as if they are worthless or as if they have not happened. Additionally, the state has taken advantage of the situation to build more military posts and dams for military purposes and to accelerate cultural genocide. This stance demonstrates how the AKP government and the state have approached the process.

Despite Leader Apo emphasising that the Kurdish Freedom Movement has fulfilled its responsibilities and that the time has come for the government to do what is necessary for the second stage, the AKP is behaving as if nothing has taken place. The speeches and manner of the Prime Minister, Ministers and Deputies illustrate the lack of seriousness in the way the government approaches this process.

The Kurdish Freedom Movement, understanding the negative attitude and lack of response of the AKP government to such a momentous step, was forced to take the decision to halt the withdrawal of guerrillas. It was wholly understandable that the Kurdish Freedom Movement take such a step when its unilateral, selfless initiative was ignored. It could not be expected that the forty-year-old Freedom Movement, that for thirty years has resisted in the harshest conditions and given 20,000 martyrs, should leave the future of the Kurdish people to a government that adopts such an attitude. While the Kurdish Freedom Movement halted the withdrawal it maintained the ceasefire, wishing to send a message to the government to take steps towards a democratic solution. While offering the government the opportunity to take steps it also sent the message that a continued lack of response and seriousness would signify that the ceasefire would also become meaningless.

The government understood the seriousness of the halting of the guerrilla withdrawal, but preferred to deflect the warning rather than act upon it.

The Turkish state, by failing to fulfill its responsibilities and refusing to recognise Leader Apo and the Kurdish Freedom Movement as a party in the process, has blocked the process at the beginning and maintained its traditional approach. Despite Leader Apo's warning regarding the package: 'without agreement being reached it will not serve the process' - the government, with its 'I know best' attitude, prepared a 'democratisation package' that ignored the sensible, flexible proposals of Leader Apo.

For weeks the government delayed producing its 'democratisation package', and when it was finally announced it created disappointment amongst all democratic forces, first and foremost the Kurds. The way in which the package was compiled meant there was no possibility of it being democratic. It was inevitable regarding the Kurdish question that the method used in producing it would influence the content.

It is apparent that the package does not meet the demands of the Kurds and democratic forces. Even the reports of the Wise Persons' Commission were not taken seriously. It appears that they wished to deflect the democratic demands of the Kurdish people and democratic forces by abolishing outdated, discredited, racist, delegitimised practices such as "our pledge", which had become a handicap for them. It is apparent that they wish to go to the elections by alleviating in this way the pressure put on them by democratic forces. Hence even the most optimistic evaluations of the package called it an election package. It has also been called a package that holds back democratisation. In an environment where thousands are in prison on flimsy grounds no one with a democratic mentality could consider the package a significant step towards a resolution of the Kurdish question or democratisation. Only the AKP and their cronies could make such a claim.

There was an expectation that the package would contain important steps towards a resolution of the Kurdish question, for the process had been initiated by the Kurdish movement and its leadership. However, it is clear the package was prepared as a delaying tactic and thus disappointed all those awaiting democratisation. The failure to attach the necessary importance to the reasonable proposals for freedom and autonomy based on the fraternity of peoples and their unique differences put forward by Leader Apo and the Kurdish Freedom Movement, in a region where sectarian, nationalist ideas are pitting peoples against each other, demonstrates the level of nationalism and denial of the Turkish state and its political representatives.  
  
The Kurdish question is a century old. Massacres and a continuous policy of cultural genocide have been implemented. In the last 30 years the Turkish state has carried out one of the most dirty wars in history, causing immeasurable damage. Although it is not officially recognised, Turkish public opinion is becoming increasingly aware of what has happened. The fact that ordinary people say: "Bad things were apparently done in the East" indicates that the reality is acknowledged.  
  
The Kurdish question cannot be resolved by packages designed as election propaganda or cosmetic steps. Such an approach is an insult to the peoples of Turkey. The people of Turkey and the Kurds have supported the process with the expectation that Turkey will become democratic and problems will be resolved, not for the AKP to manage the situation until the elections.

The Kurdish question originated from the denial of the existence of the Kurds, therefore the solution lies in the official recognition of the Kurds and of their will. As long as the old approach is clung to there can be no mention of a change in mentality. Consequently, without addressing the origins of the Kurdish question and a solution within this framework it will be impossible to achieve a solution. Without recognising the Kurds as an equal, honourable people everything that is done will consist of nothing but delay and deception.  
  
The AKP government's attitude is: "I will not officially recognise the Kurds, not even their language, I will not mention them in any official document. I will not accept them as a national community or people and no one can represent the Kurds." This is a mentality that cannot resolve the Kurdish question.

The PKK, KCK and BDP represent not all, but a significant proportion of the community that is aware of being Kurdish and has demands as regards Kurdishness. Past decades have proved this to be the case, and the fact that the state has for years been directly or indirectly in contact with these organisations is evidence of this. Therefore, to attempt to be rid of the question by liquidating the PKK and KCK will only result in more suffering and loss for the peoples of Turkey.

For a year the Prime Minister and AKP government have been sending delegations to Imrali to have meetings with Leader Apo. Everyone is aware that a process has begun. The Prime Minister himself has called it a resolution process. It is known that this means democratisation and a resolution of the Kurdish question. It is evident that this is a bilateral process, as there has never been such a process in the world conducted on a unilateral basis. Negotiations always take place between two parties, and it is essential that this happen with the Kurdish question.

The Kurdish party has declared that Leader Apo is the chief negotiator. It is a fact that if such a process is to continue it must develop from talks to negotiations and then to agreement. By acting unilaterally the AKP government is sabotaging the process. To refuse to engage in a bilateral process is to deny the existence of such a process.

It is recognised by public opinion that Leader Apo, as the initiator of the process with his Newroz manifesto, has acted responsibly for its progress. Despite the AKP government failing to fulfil its responsibilities Leader Apo and the Kurdish Freedom Movement have maintained their reasonable and patient stance in order to put pressure on the AKP government to take the necessary steps. However, the state's failure to take the Kurds seriously or take any steps has blocked the process.  
  
The Freedom Movement has announced a ceasefire on 9 occasions. Although these ceasefires have not been approached positively and have been wasted as a result of being seen as an opportunity to delay or to liquidate, it cannot be said that they have not resulted in any gains as regards democratisation or a resolution of the Kurdish question. They have played an important role in bringing to public attention how our Freedom Movement approaches a resolution of the Kurdish question and the fact it is seeking a reasonable resolution. However, since significant results were not obtained as regards a resolution of the Kurdish question and democratisation in Turkey conflict has continued until the present day.

Talks have taken place with the Turkish state for years. Although the Kurdish Freedom Movement has been aware of the delaying tactics of the state and AKP government it has not made a problem of this, thinking that in time things would change. However, at the current stage the continuing delaying tactics and efforts to make Leader Apo an instrument will only intensify the problem. Due to the government's lack of seriousness the talks have not moved on to the stage of negotiations. This is further proof that the government does not have a policy of resolution. It has adopted the same mentality in its talks with the legal democratic Kurdish political movement.

The fact that the Turkish state does not have a policy of resolution of the Kurdish question and does not have a correct approach to the process initiated by Leader Apo is apparent from the hostility it has demonstrated to the democratic revolution taking place in Rojava.

While there is no conflict in North Kurdistan and Turkey, the state's carrying on a war in Rojava using gangs is to sabotage the process.

The situation in Rojava cannot be addressed separately from the situation in North Kurdistan. The people of North Kurdistan cannot be expected to believe the AKP has a policy of resolution when it is involved in dirty alliances carrying out massacres in Rojava in order to prevent the Kurds winning rights. Turkey's approach to the process in the North and its attitude to Rojava are separate expressions of the same mentality. By looking at one it is possible to understand the other. Turkey's approach in Rojava does not stem from its policy regarding Syria, rather it stems from a fear that Kurds winning rights in Rojava will directly influence policy in North Kurdistan.

If there is to be a solution then first and foremost there must be a change in mentality. The precondition for this is to recognise the will of the Kurds and to accept them as a party. Otherwise to discuss steps being taken is a great deception. The existing reality is as stark as this.

There are fundamental conditions for the resolution of the Kurdish question. Without meeting these fundamental demands talking of details is meaningless. The parameters of these fundamental demands are clear and express an inseparable whole.

Firstly: the constitutional and legal safeguarding of the Kurds' existence, identity and culture, and recognition of the Kurdish identity and freedom of expression and association.

Secondly: Acceptance of the Kurds' existence as a society and their own administration, that is, acceptance of democratic autonomy.

Thirdly: The acceptance of mother tongue education at every level on account of their being a people subjected to cultural genocide.  
  
These are the Kurdish people's inalienable demands. It will not be possible to say denial and assimilation has ended and cultural genocide has been abandoned until these three fundamental demands are met.

These three demands that will end denial, assimilation and cultural genocide will only be met by a democratic constitution. These demands complement each other and are not meaningful individually. The Kurds' free and democratic life with a Kurdish identity is only possible with the existence of these three elements. As for how they will become concrete and be implemented will be determined by discussion, negotiation and agreement. Without the involvement of the Kurds as a party in negotiations the recognition of these demands as rights will not happen. This depends on a change in mentality.

To claim that this question can be resolved without the recognition of the political will of the Kurds, consequently, without negotiation is to deceive and cheat the Kurds.

As the Kurdish Freedom Movement we are in favour of a democratic political solution. This has always been our preference. For over 20 years Leader Apo has made efforts for this. The Kurdish Freedom Movement's theoretical renewal and change of paradigm directs us towards such a solution. Leader Apo made clear in his declaration in the character of a manifesto at Newroz 2013 what kind of solution he wanted. All organisations and components of the Kurdish Freedom Movement are in favour of such a solution.  
  
Today our movement prefers implementing this solution by means of negotiations with the Turkish state. This is the reason for the reasonable, patient approach of Leader Apo and the Freedom Movement. This approach is a historic opportunity for the Turkish state and AKP government. If the current attitude is abandoned and Leader Apo and the Freedom Movement are accepted as a party and the necessary legal provision is made in order that they may play their roles, and negotiations begin with neutral observers and a genuine process of resolution begins with the participation of important sections of the population, then it is clear that as a movement we will fulfil our responsibilities without hesitation, as we have done up to the present.  
  
If there is an insistence on the current attitude or if efforts are made to maintain it in a different form then our movement will evaluate this and take the path of constructing a free and democratic life in line with our theoretical line and paradigm. In an environment where the Kurds' rights are not recognised it is legitimate for the Kurds to take charge of their own lives. Within this framework a new multi-dimensional period of struggle will be launched. How or whether the state of non-conflict will continue, and what methods and paths our movement will prefer is dependent on the stance adopted by the AKP government and the Turkish state in the coming days.

As has been demonstrated by recent decades the resolution of the Kurdish question and the democratisation of Turkey can only be realised through struggle. Leader Apo mainly addressed the Kurdish people and the forces of democracy at Newroz 2013. He called on them to take ownership of the resolution process. The AKP government has demonstrated by failing to take any steps in the process that is supported by the peoples of Turkey and the Kurdish people, and by spoiling the process with a narrow political approach that it does not have the mentality or will to carry out democratisation. It is therefore important to oppose the stance adopted by the AKP.  
  
Whether through negotiation with the state or by establishing a free democratic life by our people's will and power, whichever it is, the attitude and struggle of our people and democratic forces will be effective. We therefore call on all democratic forces and on our people to develop a more organised, multi-dimensional struggle for the democratisation of Turkey and a resolution of the Kurdish question.

First and foremost the progressive, democratic forces of the Middle East, and progressive, democratic humanity and international forces closely observed the steps taken by Leader Apo for a democratic solution, and were witness to the preference made by the Kurds as regards a solution. The resolution of the Kurdish question and the democratisation of Turkey is of a character that will directly influence the Middle East and the world. We therefore call on progressive democratic humanity and responsible international forces to offer their support to the Kurdish people and the forces of democracy in this endeavour.  
  
We call on political forces responsible to all the peoples of the region, first and foremost Turkey, to support Leader Apo's path of resolution and paradigm to bring about free and democratic life in the entire Middle East, and thereby fulfil their responsibilities.

*Translated from the Turkish original, London, UK*