

It is states that determine the fate of entire peoples in the Middle East

Never Again

by Arif Rhein of Civaka Azad

Translated by Janet Biehl

The current conflict in the Middle East is about more than partial military successes or selective changes in borders. The very existence of entire peoples is being called into question. Their customs, cultures, values, and languages, their knowledge and their achievements are being declared null and void, destroyed or falsified. This is the experience of the Arab nation—splintered into more than 20 nation-states—which appears omnipresent throughout the region, but all the more powerless. At the end of last year, in the conflict over Artsach / Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenians were once again made to understand what role they are assigned. The Kurdish nation too is exposed to such massive, systematic attacks that it is difficult not to speak of genocide—not to mention the fate of the Greeks, Assyrians, Circassians, Laz, and many other peoples, whose colors today are only faintly discernible in the Middle Eastern mosaic.

It is states that claim the right to decide the fate of entire peoples in the Middle East, peoples whose millennia-old history is however considered the foundation of human history. NATO - the most powerful global alliance of capitalist modernity - plays the leading role in planning and implementing this genocidal strategy. Corporations in Great Britain, the United States, France and Germany therefore bear special responsibility. For them the urgent question that arises is which alternative relationships they would like to establish with the peoples and societies whose respective states they are intent on destroying.

Genocide of Kurds as a Prerequisite for Restructuring the Middle East

Capitalist modernity will not be able to overcome its profound crisis unless it fully integrates the Middle East. Imperialist interventions have been ongoing in the region for over 200 years, yet it remains a kind of gray spot on the map of global capitalist hegemony. Middle Eastern peoples have not been able to entirely escape capitalist influences, yet neither have they been willing to adopt the canon of values of liberalism and its associated political and economic structures such as the nation-state, industrialism, and the fetishization of profit. As a result, it has adopted a self-alienating chaotic mixture of western-capitalist clichés, an insistence on feudal-religious dogmas, and a self-conscious updating of democratic-cultural values. But capitalist modernity can never be satisfied with that. Especially in view of its deep systemic crisis, it insists on wholly subjugating the Middle East and integrating it without exceptions into the process of capitalist exploitation. The system hopes thereby to obtain the breathing space it needs to extend the capitalist balance of power for a few decades.

The Kurds are one of the region's most ancient peoples. They played an immense role in the Neolithic Revolution, in the emergence of the first Sumerian city-states, and in the political and economic shaping of the entire Middle East. Any effort to destroy the culture, historical awareness, and political order of the region would have to concentrate most of their energy on

the Kurdish people. No one will be able to understand the global and strategic scope of the current conflict. Only in this broad historical context can anyone fathom the decades-long attacks on the Kurdish achievements and their resulting resistance.

Abdullah Öcalan speaks repeatedly and very deliberately of a genocidal strategy that is being deployed against the Kurds. The topic runs like a red thread through all his speeches and writings over the past decades. Perhaps the most concentrated presentation of his reflections in this vein can be found on the first pages of his book *The Kurdish Question and the Democratic Nation*: “The real suffering that capitalist modernity, which is geared towards limitless profit, inflicts on all peoples, and on all the oppressed and unemployed classes, consists not in their material exploitation but rather in their utter destruction of cultural values. All material and ideal cultural values that are outside the official culture of the nation-state are destroyed. Otherwise it would be entirely impossible to transform humanity and the natural environment into resources available for consumption The situation of the Kurds is the most succinct and tragic example of cultural genocide. The nation-states that dominate the Kurdish people bring their entire material and ideal cultural values to groans with the help of their crucifixion-like mechanism. Their labor and ultimately all social wealth and natural resources are blatantly plundered. Anything left over is to be destroyed, deprived of work, left to rot. It is so disfigured that one does not even want to live or to look at it. It seems that the Kurdish people have only one option left: to dissolve themselves into the ruling nation-state and completely give up their own values. No other way of life exists. From time to time the Kurdish genocide also reaches the level of physical genocide. It is perhaps one of the most succinct and tragic cases that clearly expresses the essence of capitalist modernity.”¹

This policy, which Abdullah Öcalan describes so clearly, denies the Kurdish people their place in the world. It considers Kurdish history, values, and social traditions to be nothing more than obstacles to be removed. The crudest representatives of this policy simply deny the existence, the right to exist, of the Kurdish people. Its most offensive representatives can be found in the German and Turkish state bureaucracies, but also in the ranks of Arab Baath ideologues such as those in Syria’s Assad regime. A more subtle genocide strategy, pursued primarily by Great Britain, the USA, and Israel, is to create an artificial, liberal-polluted, impotent “modern” Kurdishness through which any politics can be pursued at will. The flagship project of this strategy is undoubtedly the political entity in South Kurdistan (northern Iraq), with the KDP (Democratic Party of Kurdistan) as its mainstay. Both approaches share in common a desire to prevent at all costs the emergence of a Kurdish nation conscious of its identity and strength, which would present a decisive obstacle to global capitalist system’s reorganization of the Middle East.

KDP, AKP, and MHP: Local Executors of an International Strategy

Every day for 100 years, the Turkish state and its various successive governments have mounted direct attacks on the existence of the Kurds. The current AKP-MHP coalition is the most recent version, seamlessly joining the ranks of Turkish governments that have actively participated in NATO’s genocidal strategy in accordance with the Turkish state’s anti-Kurdish tradition. The spiral of violence in Kurdistan, which Turkey has been steadily stoking since the summer of 2015, must therefore be understood in the context of this international strategy. The leading

NATO powers, in particular, are acutely aware that if they are to protect themselves from massive protests in their own societies, they absolutely must appear to be keeping their distance from, and criticizing, the crimes committed in Kurdistan. Accordingly, German, British, US, and French government representatives are happy to condemn the Erdoğan regime's policies in their official statements, and these countries' media coverage also does not lack critical tones. But the actions taken by these states speak a different language. The AKP-MHP regime never runs out of things it urgently needs, such as weapons, money, and political legitimacy, which it then uses to systematically expel, torture, and kill people in largely Kurdish areas such as Afrin, Sere Kaniye, Heftanin and Xakurke.

Over the past year, one thing that observers in the region have been pointing out for years has become very clear: the KDP plays an inglorious role in the Kurdish genocide. The KDP, organized as a party in 1946, is currently part of the ruling South Kurdish governing coalition. For some ten years, it has maintained close relations with Turkey, with the result that today economically, militarily, and politically, Turkey occupies large parts of South Kurdistan. Until recently the KDP tended to accept this situation tacitly and to hide its own partisanship in favor of the Turkish occupation and genocide. But in 2020, the KDP changed its policy. It is now massively deploying troops to areas along the Turkish-Iraqi border that guerrilla units of the People's Defense Forces (HPG) have controlled for decades. Every day now it uses its TV channels Kurdistan24 and Rudaw to carry out aggressive media campaigns against the PKK, and whenever people in South Kurdistan express sympathy for the resistance against the policies of Turkey and the underlying NATO strategy, it responds by arresting them.

Raperîn Mûnzûr, a board member of PAJK (Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan, Party of Free Women in Kurdistan), recently described the role of the KDP this way: "Within the framework of the policy of Kurdish genocide driven by the international powers and by Turkish fascism, and the plans to smash our movement, the KDP plays the role of a local collaborator. It tries to profit from the international economy and wartime conditions and has accordingly gone on the attack. The enemies of the Kurdish people have as their fundamental goal to completely crush the PKK in Kurdistan and the entire Middle East and to prevent the Kurds from ever gaining their freedom. This is a NATO plan. The Turkish state and the KDP are recognizably part of this international policy; certain tasks have been assigned to them, and they are given support and approvals and are actively driven to act. The KDP seeks to find its place in these conditions and to ensure profits."² It is important to realize that the KDP is the organizational center of a political line that represents Kurdish nationalism, a politically authoritarian state, and economic nepotism. That this policy has had unbearable consequences for the people became apparent in December 2020, when the South Kurdish people came out in large protests. This KDP line is also taken by groups outside South Kurdistan, such as the ENKS (Kurdish National Council) in Rojava, and in the Kurdish community in Germany.

Organizing Against Genocide

Understandably, the Kurds actively resist plans for their extermination. While the Arab nation and the Armenian people are similarly subjected to aggressive attacks on their existence, their strategies differ from the Kurdish people's self-defense against genocide over decades in a decisive respect: over decades the Kurdish nation has established a solid organizational

framework that allows it to assert itself against genocide effectively and over the long term. Neither the “Arab Spring” nor the defense of the Armenian presence in Artsach / Nagorno-Karabakh was underpinned by this degree of social organization, with the result that they fell short of achieving their goals, at least for now. The Kurdish people, on the other hand, maintain hundreds of political organizations everywhere in Kurdistan and in the diaspora, all of which pursue a self-confident political strategy based on clear ideological convictions. This strategy is not limited to self-defense against genocide but also works actively to build a political and social alternative. The best-known examples are Rojava and the Democratic Federation of North and East Syria.

One of the central organizations that the Kurds have established to defend their existence as a people and a society is the PKK. It possesses the combination of ideological foresight, organizational strength, and political perspective that are so urgently needed in the face of massive attacks by NATO, Turkey, and the KDP. Bese Hozat, co-chair of the KCK (Association of Kurdish Societies) and longtime member of the PKK, describes its role as follows: “What is the PKK? The PKK represents the resistant Kurdish identity. It represents Kurds who are resisting. It stands for all Kurds who fight against genocide. . . . It resists in all four parts of Kurdistan. In South Kurdistan it is the resistance for the dignity of all Kurds. It fights for their dignity. For their freedom. It fights the colonialist and fascist AKP-MHP-Ergenekon government, which is committing genocide.”³

The PKK has been massively attacked in regular media campaigns, military operations, and by Abdullah Öcalan's twenty-year imprisonment, yet these attacks are not directed against a single organization. They are an expression of the refusal of NATO and its local allies to recognize a self-confident, culturally stable Kurdish identity that acts on its own. The PKK's decades-long political struggle can only be explained by the fact that a large part of the Kurdish nation participates in the establishment and continuation of this organization and its struggle. How else would the PKK have been able to hold its own against all the relentless attacks? It is not hard to guess that the Kurds' resistance to the genocide efforts will continue in the future and become more intense. Because just like any other people in the world, Kurds will not allow themselves to be forced to deny their identity or to adopt liberal-polluted identity clichés.

German Teaching and Current Responsibility

German society knows what genocide is. It experienced it with its own eyes, participated in it, and also resisted it. In the 1960s and '70s, German youth fought to come to terms with responsibility for the Holocaust and thus made an important contribution to exposing the weaknesses of German society and the German state's ruthless drive for global power. To a significant extent, the lessons from this discussion shape the self-image of German society today. In 1966 Theodor Adorno warned against rejecting the practical consequences of these findings: “Yet the fact that one is so barely conscious of this demand and the questions it raises shows that the monstrosity has not penetrated people's minds deeply, itself a symptom of the continuing potential for its recurrence as far as peoples' conscious and unconscious is concerned. Every debate about the ideals of education is trivial and inconsequential compared to this single ideal: never again Auschwitz.”⁴

He must have had good reasons for making this urgent warning, having witnessed German fascism himself and intensively studied the defining features of German social identity. As a result of his experience and research, he described German society of the time as “ a banding together of people completely cold who cannot endure their own coldness and yet cannot change it. Every person today, without exception, feels too little loved, because every person cannot love enough. The inability to identify with others was unquestionably the most important psychological condition for the fact that something like Auschwitz could have occurred in the midst of more or less civilized and innocent people.”

Adorno's urgent call for active resistance against the repetition of the systematic annihilation of entire peoples is and remains current for German society. Because even today an alliance of Germany's state bureaucracy, its economic elite, and its military strategists are directly and indirectly planning, enabling, and supporting fascism, genocide, and war. It is difficult to describe the uninterrupted German support for the Turkish dictatorship and its systematic human rights crimes in Kurdistan in any other way. A current example of this is the political debate about deporting Syrian refugees to Afrin, Serekaniye, and Gire Spe, regions occupied and depopulated by Turkey, and paying millions of euros to build the necessary local infrastructure. German support for the resistance of the Kurds, which has been provided for decades, is therefore far more important than local projects or temporary campaigns may make clear. Anyone who opposes the NATO strategy of a Kurdish genocide and the use of Turkish fascism as its sidekick will help the Kurdish people preserve their culture, language, history, and values. And he or she will prove that German society takes seriously Adorno's fifty-five-year-old appeal and will never again allow genocide to be committed with their resources and in their name.

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Notes

¹ Abdullah Ocalan, *Kürt Sorunu ve Demokratik Ulus Cözümü* (Mezopotamya Yayinlari, 2012), p. 35.

² In an interview on December 27, 2020, at <https://firatnews.com/kurdistan/-150040>

³ In an interview on November 2, 2020, for the television station Medya Haber

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, “Education After Auschwitz” (1966), <https://tinyurl.com/24udp994>.