

Rt. Hon. Liz Truss MP  
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Copy to  
Rt Hon Lisa Nandy MP  
Shadow Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

*3 October 2021*

## OPEN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF THE RELEASE OF MR ABDULLAH OCALAN

Dear Foreign Secretary

Your office will be aware of the ongoing incarceration of Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdish people, by the authorities in Turkey. We call on the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to make representations to the Turkish government calling for Mr Ocalan's release.

Abdullah Ocalan was captured in a NATO-orchestrated operation in Nairobi, Kenya on 15 February 1999 and has been held by the Turkish authorities ever since then, often in solitary confinement, on Imrali Island in the Sea of Marmara. Abdullah Ocalan was deprived of his freedom without a fair trial and without a proper judicial process conducted by an independent court observing the standards of international law. In contravention of both national and international law and in violation of elementary human rights, Abdullah Ocalan has been denied access to legal representation and to see his family. Her Majesty's government must express its clear objections to this woeful procedure.

For the Kurdish people, Abdullah Ocalan has a status and significance equivalent to that which Nelson Mandela had for his people in South Africa. His freedom is critical to ensuring a lasting peace in Turkey and the Middle East. Abdullah Ocalan's inhuman treatment demonstrates the determination of the Turkish state, headed by President Erdogan, to prosecute a war of annihilation against every manifestation of the Kurdish people's desire for representation and democracy.

Since his incarceration Ocalan has written several books dealing with the history and problems of the Middle East that have won academic acclaim. He has presented a case for a democratic solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey and the Middle East and a road map to reaching it. He has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to seek that solution by taking practical steps. Since the early 1990s he has proposed negotiations with the Turkish authorities and sued for peace. Talks that Abdullah Ocalan held with the Turkish government between 2013 and 2015 encouraged a strong degree of optimism. A joint public declaration made at the Dolmabahce Palace, Istanbul on 28 February 2015 suggested that progress had been made and that a peaceful and democratic solution was within reach. However, President Erdogan's intervention ended the negotiations, and the peace process was replaced by war and a futile attempt to impose a military solution. This war continues. If Turkey had a political leader who sought peace rather than to restore the reach and power of the Ottoman Empire through war, that leader would negotiate with Abdullah Ocalan, rather than demonise the Kurds and criminalise their representatives.

Peace in Kurdistan is sending its solidarity to the sit-in strike that will be taking place in Strasbourg commencing at 1.00pm local time on 2 October 2021 and will repeat the call 'Now is the time for freedom.' As a seat for the European Parliament and the host of the Council of Europe and the European Committee on the Prevention of Torture, it is fitting that- Abdullah Ocalan's cause is brought to Strasbourg. His name and the values that he proclaims will resonate through those illustrious halls: The Time for Freedom is Now – Freedom for Ocalan Shall Prevail. At this time when Kurdish people are showing their solidarity with their chosen political leader, we call on the British government to raise the treatment of Abdullah Ocalan with Turkey and use its influence to steer the Turkish authorities on the path towards peace, which will benefit us all.

Yours sincerely

Peace in Kurdistan on behalf of Patrons and supporters:

*John Austin, Baroness Blower of Starch Green, former GS NUT, Prof Bill Bowring, Julie Christie, Noam Chomsky, Prof Mary Davis, Lord Dholakia, Simon Dubbins, UNITE International Director, Jill Evans, former MEP, Desmond Fernandes, Lindsey German, Convenor STWC, Melanie Gingell, Christopher Gingell, Prof Dr. Michael Gunter, Secretary-General, EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC), Rahila Gupta, journalist, Nick Hildyard, policy advisor, Dafydd Iwan, Former President Plaid Cymru, James Kelman, Bruce Kent, Jean Lambert, former MEP, Dr Les Levidow, Open University, Elfyn Llwyd, John McDonnell MP; Aonghas MacNeacail, Scottish Gaelic poet, Mike Mansfield QC, David Morgan, journalist, Doug Nicholls, General Secretary, GFTU, Dr. Jessica Ayesha Northey, Sinn Fein MLA Conor Murphy, Dr Thomas Jeffrey Miley, Kate Osamor MP, Margaret Owen OBE, Ali Gul Ozbek, Former Councillor and Mayor of Haringey; Gareth Peirce, Dr Felix Padel, Maxine Peake, actor, Dr Thomas Phillips, Liverpool John Moores University, Trevor Rayne, writer, Joe Ryan, Tony Simpson, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Stephen Smellie, PIK Trade Union Liaison Officer, Jonathan Steele, journalist, Steve Sweeney, journalist, Gianni Tognoni, General Secretary Permanent People's Tribunal, Dr Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Dr Federico Venturini, Associate Researcher, University of Udine, Italy; Dr Tom Wakeford, Dr Derek Wall, Julie Ward, former MEP, Kariane Westrheim, Chair, EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC); Hywel Williams MP.*

*Dr. Nicholas S.M. Matheou, historian; Dr Amber Huff, Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies; Dr Patrick Huff, Lecturer, Birkbeck, University of London; Rajiv Menon QC, Barrister; John Hendy QC; Alastair Lyon, Birnberg Peirce Solicitors; Dr Les Levidow, Senior Research Fellow, Open University; Mick Wheelan, ASLEF General Secretary; Lord Hylton; Baroness Jenny Tongue; Chris Stephens SNP MP; Nathan Felix, composer, US; Sean Michael Wilson, writer; Shavanagh Taj, TUC Wales General Secretary; Dr Camilla Power, Research Fellow, Anthropology; Sarah Parker, human rights campaigner; Jonathan Bloch, writer; Saleh Mamon, CAMPACC; John Hunt, journalist; Jan Woolf, writer; Sean Michael Wilson, writer; Andrew Burgin, Left Unity; Janet Biehl, writer and artist, US; Orsola Casagrande, journalist, writer, Spain;*

## **Peace in Kurdistan**

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