

# THE IMRALI POST

YOU HEARD HIS NAME. LEARN HIS STORY. DEMAND HIS FREEDOM.

Issue № 6 / 24 March 2022 ★ Contact: imralipost@freecalan.org

## Contents

<b>Newroz Celebrations.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Hundreds of thousands celebrate Newroz in Istanbul, demand freedom for Öcalan.....	2
One million people attend the Newroz rally in Amed.....	3
Guerrillas celebrate Newroz in Zap.....	4
Newroz celebration by guerrillas in Behdinan.....	5
2022 Newroz in North and East Syria: Freedom for Öcalan.....	5
<b>Greetings of Solidarity.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Peace in Kurdistan Campaign sends its greetings of solidarity on Newroz 2022.....	7
Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn sends Newroz message to Kurdish community in UK.....	8
<b>Violence of the Turkish State.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Amed Newroz Committee: More than one million people gathered against isolation.....	9
HPG reports intensive Turkish attacks on guerrilla areas in South Kurdistan.....	10
At least 488 detained during Newroz celebrations.....	12
Musicians detained for “forbidden songs” at Newroz celebration.....	14
‘Release the children detained during Diyarbakır Newroz’.....	14
At least twenty detained in ongoing political extermination campaign.....	15
Police violence after Newroz celebrations in Kızıltepe recorded on camera.....	15
<b>Prisons.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Second death in suspicious circumstances in Turkish prison in one month.....	16
Osman Kavala remains in prison.....	17
20-year-old prisoner died suspiciously in Van jail.....	19
<b>Human Rights.....</b>	<b>19</b>
IPPNW delegation visits the Justice Vigil in Urfa.....	19
Human rights activist sentenced to six years in prison on terror charges.....	21
<b>Articles.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Newroz: Kurds’ rebirth from their own ashes.....	21
<b>Who Are We?.....</b>	<b>26</b>

# Newroz Celebrations

## Hundreds of thousands celebrate Newroz in Istanbul, demand freedom for Öcalan

ANF | ISTANBUL | 20 MARCH 2022

At an impressively large Newroz celebration in Istanbul on Sunday, hundreds of thousands of people once again showed that the Kurds' struggle for peace, freedom and democracy cannot be suppressed with repression and violence. "Now is the time for success" was also the slogan of this year's Newroz in the Bosphorus metropolis. The main demand—the release of Abdullah Öcalan—echoed through the square in the Yenikapı port district in the form of the slogan "Bijî Serok Apo." Although there was talk of a "celebration," it was more accurate to speak of a day of struggle.

Since the morning, large crowds of people had been streaming into the celebration square in marches. In addition to hundreds of buses, the Istanbul HDP associations had also hired several ferries to transport the participants free of charge. The resistance song Çerxa Şoreşê (The Wheel of Revolution) rang out particularly loudly from the youth movement blocks. The police, who had set up several checkpoints around the Yenikapı harbor, were hopelessly overwhelmed in their attempts to reduce the pace of the demonstration marches in some places. This was compensated in the further course by the prevented participation of a few people in the celebration because of supposedly prohibited symbolism. This mainly involved scarves with the logo of the HDP and the likeness of its imprisoned former co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş.

The stage program started with live music by the singer Huriye, accompanied by a street band. With the low temperatures that prevailed, the guests accompanied the concert with especially extensive dancing that made the ground tremble in some places. When a team from the organizing committee stepped up to the microphones to greet the crowd, the cheers almost triggered a quake. After a minute of silence for Mazlum Doğan, Zekiye Alkan and all other "Newroz fallen," the slogans "Şehîd Namirin" and "Bijî Serok Apo" were chanted.

The opening speech of the Istanbul Newroz came from Atilla Özdoğan. It was read from a joint statement by the Newroz Alliance, which, in addition to the HDP and HDK, also includes various small parties and organizations from the left and socialist spectrum, including the "United Fighting Forces" (BMG) and the "Democracy Coalition." Under the slogans "No to war and occupation, no to male-dominated politics, no to racism and discrimination - yes to freedom, women's liberation, ecology, democracy and peace" the line for the common struggle was set. Following this, activists from the Mothers of Peace initiative entered the square and lit the Newroz fire.

## **Demir: We are the forces that want another Turkey**

The stage program continued with political speeches and live music. Esengül Demir, the co-spokesperson of the HDK - the “Democratic Peoples Congress” from which the HDP emerged in 2012 - called Newroz 2022 a “resurrection day” against the regime's repression. After the protests on the March 8 Feminist Day of Struggle, Newroz showed once again that those who “want a different and, above all, democratized Turkey” will not disappear despite all the repression, he said.

“We are hundreds of thousands and our message is, 'We are here and we will continue to resist.' We are the force that will liberate this country from the palace regime. We draw the source of our strength from the unification of people who are in the streets on Women's Struggle Day, Newroz and May Day, raising their voices loudly for their rights and against the policies of the rulers,” Demir said.

The HDK spokeswoman went on to call for the release of Abdullah Öcalan. She said that the mastermind of the Kurdish liberation movement was the most important political representative of the Kurds and a key figure in the solution of the Kurdish question. “The end of the isolation system on İmralı and Öcalan's freedom are therefore indispensable for peace in Kurdistan, Turkey and the entire region.”

## **Sancar: Sticking to the third way**

HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar also gave a speech. The politician began by congratulating everyone present on the New Year, calling Newroz a “symbol of hope for a new life” that represents resistance to injustice and the hunger for justice. Sancar then addressed the “adherence to the third way” as an initiative for a democratic future for the peoples of Turkey, recalling the contents of the Newroz Declaration issued by Abdullah Öcalan in 2013. This “historic” position paper, he said, had already shown Turkey's societies the way to a “just peace” nine years ago. “This is what we hold on to as a party. Because this is the essence of our strategic position on Turkey,” Sancar said. The state, he said, must find its way back to the negotiating table, which it unilaterally overturned in 2015 to return to “total war.” He added that the HDP also wants to continue working for an end to escalation and confrontation so that a lasting and just peace can be made possible at the negotiating table.

## **One million people attend the Newroz rally in Amed**

ANF | AMED | 22 MARCH 2022

The mass rally in the resistance stronghold of Amed (Diyarbakır) marked the historical highlight of the Newroz New Year celebrations in Kurdistan this year. The whole city, which was lit up everywhere in green, red and yellow, was on its feet. Hundreds of thousands were on the move, in the end there were a good million people on the Newroz area. “Now is the time of success”, the motto of Newroz this year with the main demand “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan”, was visible in the masses going to the park reacting to the shelling of gas grenades and water cannons with the slogan “Bijî Serok Apo”. Police provocations by attempting to arrest young people at countless checkpoints and on the celebration grounds failed due to verbal resistance. Newroz in Amed was once again more than just a festival. It was a demonstration of the indomitable will of a resistant people, an act of civil disobedience and, above all, a day of political struggle.

The program was rich and varied. On stage, political speeches alternated with music by artists such as Rolda, Azad Bedran, Servet Kocakaya, Kazo, as well as messages sent from prison by former HDP MP Leyla Güven and the deposed co-mayor of Amed, Adnan Selçuk Mızraklı from. The chairmen of the parties from the Kurdistan Alliance appeared on the stage together with the political veteran Ahmet Türk. The 79-year-old appealed to the political parties in Kurdistan, divided into four, to find “national unity. It is time that we came together to formulate common positions. If we really care about the Kurdish cause, we have to come to an understanding and put differences aside. History will not forgive us for behaving differently, nor will our people. It is necessary to make policies suitable for the new era, strengthen democratic forces and rally our people around common values.”

The co-chair of the grassroots coalition Democratic Society Congress (DTK), Berdan Öztürk, led his speech by saying, “The undertone of this year's Newroz is unmistakable; It's the time of success, it's the time of victory. This Newroz is the celebration of Abdullah Öcalan's freedom.”

Öztürk spoke about the phase from 2014, when the so-called destruction plan (“Çöktüre Planı”), a military and political concept of annihilation against Kurdish society and its organized structures, was initiated in Ankara and war, crises and conflicts have been unfolding ever since continue to intensify. “This is the only strategy of the rulers in Ankara. They have chosen hostility towards the Kurds as a way instead of listening to the words of Abdullah Öcalan, which said: freedom, equality, democracy and just peace. It's not too late to stray from the wrong path and make peace with this people.”

The highlight of this year's Newroz in Amed was the speech by HDP chairperson Pervin Buldan, who was greeted with the slogan “Bijî Serok Apo” and received thunderous applause. “Once again, it is the people of Amed who are making history on this day. Newroz is our traditional historical spring festival, which has become a political festival in resistance to oppression and colonialism. Newroz also means hope, brotherhood and courage. On this historic day you have once again defied those who do not respect your rights. This attitude, which deserves to be appreciated, is the manifest expression of the Roadmap to Democracy, Peace and Justice.”

## Guerrillas celebrate Newroz in Zap

ANF | BEHDINAN | 23 MARCH 2022

Despite Turkish air and artillery attacks, the fighters of the People's Defense Forces (HPG) and the Free Women's Troops (YJA Star) celebrated the Newroz festival in all regions with passionate celebrations and ceremonies. In the Zap region of the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq), a large guerrilla group lit a fire. In a speech, the fighters stated: “We will make 2022 the year of freedom for Rêber Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] and Kurdistan. We will do everything for this and, if necessary, give our last drop of blood. We will make 2022 the year of victory. No one should doubt that.”

**“The ‘Bazên Zagrosê’ offensive will be continued much more strongly”**

The fighters underlined that the offensive “Bazên Zagrosê”, which started in 2021, will continue much stronger in 2022: “We lost many very valuable friends in the 2021 offensive. But we repelled and swept

away the enemy's forces, which shows that victory is near." After the speech, the guerrilla fighters danced to revolutionary songs. As darkness fell, the fighters celebrated the Newroz Festival with fireworks.

The celebrations show the security with which the guerrillas can move in the Medya Defense Zones despite massive Turkish attacks in recent days, and even hold events with large fires and fireworks.

## Newroz celebration by guerrillas in Behdinan

ANF | BEHDINAN | 23 MARCH 2022

HPG and YJA Star guerrillas celebrated Newroz by lighting a fire in the Behdinan region of the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

Dozens of guerrillas came together for the celebrations. Rojhat Muş, one of the guerrilla commanders, spoke about the meaning of Newroz. The commander emphasized that guerrillas displayed great heroic deeds in 2021, which marked the 2634th anniversary of Newroz.

Muş drew attention to the resistance of Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, the people of Kurdistan and the guerrillas. The guerrilla commander underlined that they welcomed 2022 with profound faith and determination.

After the speech, fighters danced around the fire. During the celebration, guerrillas Gelhat Berfin and Rûken Dersim wished success for the year 2022. HBDH guerrilla Fera Yeşilgöz also congratulated the peoples on Newroz.

## 2022 Newroz in North and East Syria: Freedom for Öcalan

ANF | QAMISHLO | 22 MARCH 2022

As people welcomed the month of March with huge enthusiasm in the lands of North and East Syria, the common result of ideas and events is the physical freedom of Kurdish leader Öcalan.

During the Newroz celebrations, peoples responded to the isolation of Öcalan, fascism and occupation in the spirit of freedom, unity and resistance.

The plans of the Turkish state have been rendered futile thanks to the prices paid. Guerrillas displayed outstanding heroism in Garê, Werxelê, Mam Reşo, Zendura and Girê Sor.

Newroz does not just mean the coming of spring, it also stands for rebellion and resistance. It is the defiance of the oppressed peoples against ruthless tyrants. Newroz is the symbol of the unity and solidarity of peoples.

## Preparation for Newroz

As every year, the people made preparations in advance for the Newroz celebrations. Photos of Öcalan and PKK, TEV-DEM, YPJ/YPG, SDF, Kongra Star flags were displayed in streets, neighbourhoods and towns.

In the celebrations that started in the evening, torches were lit, and the people jumped over the fire and danced while chanting the slogan 'Bijî Serok Apo' (Long Live Leader Öcalan”.

Wearing traditional colourful dresses, the people joined a convoy with ululations, slogans and vehicles were decorated with Öcalan's photos and PKK flags. Hundreds of thousands of people participated in the 2022 Newroz festival. The Newroz fire lit by the families of martyrs created a spectacular atmosphere accompanied by the slogan of 'Şehîd namirin' (Martyrs are immortal), victory signs and ululations.

The people flocked to the Newroz area in their local clothes and performed the traditional dance with ululations and the slogan 'Be Serok jîyan nabe' (No life without the leader).

The festival areas were decorated with red, yellow and green balloons, ribbons, TEV-DEM, YPG, YPJ, SDF, Kongra Star banners, and photos of Öcalan and Kurdistan freedom martyrs. The security measures taken by the Internal Security Forces remained in force until the end of Newroz events, and ambulances waited near the event areas for emergency.

## Newroz events overcrowded

This year's Newroz celebrations were dedicated to Öcalan, political prisoners, guerrillas and fighters fighting for freedom.

The events were overcrowded for a dignified life. All people from 7 to 70 flocked to the area with their local clothes and PKK flags. Arab, Armenian, Syriac, Yazidi and Turkmen people were united for freedom.

Folklore, music and theatre groups affiliated with TEV-ÇAND and Hilala Zêrîn Culture and Art Movement performed their arts.

## Women led the celebrations

Just as the women who said 'the Rojava Revolution is the Women's Revolution', the women who participated and led the preparation process of Newroz once again proved that the Newroz is of utmost importance to them. With their colourful local dresses, songs, halay and slogans, the women led the celebrations of Newroz which represents a rebirth for them.

## Insistance on freedom

Physical freedom of Öcalan was emphasized during the celebrations in North and East Syria. The participants vowed to increase the struggle against attacks and special wars and to fight for freedom until the end. It was also stated that fascist forces could not destroy the freedom line and the PKK represents the Newroz for the oppressed peoples.

During the celebrations that continued the whole day in Qamishlo, Derik and Tirbespiyê, peoples promised to expand the struggle in the lands of Kurdistan.

# Greetings of Solidarity

## Peace in Kurdistan Campaign sends its greetings of solidarity on Newroz 2022

ANF | LONDON | 20 MARCH 2022

Peace in Kurdistan Campaign issued a statement to send its greetings of solidarity on Newroz 2022 to the Kurdish people.

The statement reads as follows:

“Kurdish people will be commemorating the 50th anniversary of Newroz on 21 March 2022 in cities, towns and villages, in urban areas and rural settings, right across Kurdistan and in the diaspora. Newroz is a time of unity, solidarity and community.

The mass communal gatherings of Kurds are a splendid sight to witness, as anyone who has had the good fortune to experience such events at first hand will confirm. Newroz brings together Kurds from all different social backgrounds, uniting Kurds of all ages and bridging the generations, as families, individuals, youth and elderly, along with friends, join together in song, music and dance to reaffirm their common humanity and dignity as a nation and people.

Peace In Kurdistan sends greetings to everyone marking Newroz 2022 and we stand in solidarity with the Kurds equally in their celebrations and in their continued resistance until peace is won.

We remember the political prisoners languishing in jail who are prevented from joining in the celebrations in person, but who will no doubt be celebrating in their own way.

We send our solidarity to Abdullah Ocalan and all these political prisoners and demand their release, noting that Turkey carries on filling its jails with unjustly detained Kurdish activists, artists, journalists and civil society leaders.

Our thoughts are also with the martyred Kurdish men and women, who are fallen heroes in the historic struggle to liberate their people. Their selfless sacrifices will never be forgotten, and they live on forever in the collective memory of the Kurdish people, and especially in the hearts of their grieving families and loved ones.

We stand in solidarity with those facing violence and oppression from the state forces in the Kurdish region, in particular those on the frontline who endure the bullets and bombs every day as attacks by Turkish military against Kurdish homes and civilian residences go on unchecked.

Peace in Kurdistan notes the brazenly hypocritical position of Turkish leaders in respect of the conflict in Ukraine where Ankara is currently posing as a peace broker, while relentlessly waging its war against the Kurds.

The international community of nations must be even handed in its approach to conflicts, and we must condemn the selective sympathy with the victims of war and aggression in different conflict zones. The Western powers' support for the people of Ukraine comes in stark contrast to the refusal to even acknowledge the destruction inflicted on Kurdish communities by the Turkish military which has been going on uninterrupted for years with hardly a word of criticism and a complete lack of action to stop it.

The right and honest response is surely to extend solidarity to human suffering whenever it occurs without favouritism or political bias.

It is now fifty years since the Kurds took their fate into their own hands heralding the start of a new phase in the Kurdish people's struggle for self-determination. The Kurdish spirit of solidarity and resistance flourishes today as a result of the political leadership of Abdullah Ocalan and the Kurdish Freedom Movement.

The people's unflinching determination to win their liberation remains as solid as the rocks on which they are building their new community out of the ashes of the old.

Newroz is a time to reaffirm our commitments. Peace in Kurdistan sends greetings of solidarity to Kurds wherever they are celebrating.

Victory to the resistance, for social justice and human liberation. Towards a new life whose seeds are sown in Rojava and all over free Kurdistan. Let the spirit of Newroz renew hope that peace and justice will come through all our efforts and dedication."

## Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn sends Newroz message to Kurdish community in UK

ANF | LONDON | 21 MARCH 2022

Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn sent a message to the Kurdish community in the UK on the occasion of Newroz. Corbyn said that "the Newroz festival is a celebration of some of the qualities that have made the Kurdish people famous around the world. I have stood by the Kurdish people for many years, in their long struggle for self-determination, autonomy and dignity."

On this Newroz, said Corbyn, "I want to tell the Kurdish people that I continue to recognise and stand in solidarity with their political struggle. Not only did the Kurdish people face the brunt of ISIS's violence,

but they have long suffered extreme violence, ethnic cleansing and genocide at the hands of repressive regimes throughout their historic homeland – from Saddam Hussein’s ‘Anfal’ campaign of genocide in the 1990s, to recent devastating invasions by the Turkish Armed Forces conducted against the autonomous Kurdish-led region of Rojava.”

Corbyn underlined that in the UK “we are fortunate to have a vibrant and growing Kurdish community, including in own constituency. I will continue to meet and work alongside Kurdish community representatives and leaders. In addition, I will continue working to support the Kurdish cause on the national and international stage. I have previously called for sanctions on Turkey in response to their brutal actions against the Kurds. Negotiation with Ocalan are a ‘path to peace’ and the Turkish government must resolve this issue through dialogue and peace negotiations like those in place from 2013-2015, not unilateral warfare which harms many civilians.”

## Violence of the Turkish State

Amed Newroz Committee: More than one million people gathered against isolation

ANF | AMED | 23 MARCH 2022

The Amed (Diyarbakır) Newroz Organizing Committee held a press conference at the New Garden Hotel about the Newroz celebration held in the city on March 21 with the participation of more than one million people. Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) deputies Dersim Dağ and Remziye Tosun also attended the meeting.

“People were battered. Hundreds of them were detained. Despite everything, security forces could not prevent millions from entering the area,” HDP provincial Co-Chair Zeyyat Ceylan said.

### 'People defied Newroz ban and oppression'

“Hundreds of police officers were deployed around the stage to prevent us from doing our job. However, we express our gratitude to the people of Amed. They rejected oppression, detentions and arrests. They (the state) attacked our language, culture and existence. However, these attacks were frustrated in the 2022 Newroz celebrations,” Ceylan said.

Ceylan remarked that the demands highlighted in the Newroz declaration announced on March 10 by the parties of the Kurdistan Alliance Initiative were renewed during the Newroz celebrations; removal of the isolation of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, achievement of his physical freedom, establishment of national unity for the freedom of the Kurds, recognition of the Kurdish language as a language of education, release of sick prisoners and promotion of democratic politics. “These demands were the main demands of the Newroz celebrations,” he added.

## 'People gave a message against isolation'

HDP Amed Provincial Co-Chair Gülistan Atasoy emphasized that the celebration took place despite all kinds of provocative attempts by the state authorities. “The call for an end to the assimilation policies on the Kurdish people's cultural identity has been renewed. The people of Amed have shown that they embraced the will for the ending of bans on the Kurdish language and its recognition as a language of education,” she said.

Atasoy stated that her party had assigned 600 people to ensure security in the celebration area, but they were not allowed by the state authorities. She pointed out that “anti-Kurdish and misogynist” policies of the government were nullified in this year's Newroz.

## Political genocide operations before Newroz

HDP member lawyer Serhat Eren said that the government crackdown started even before the Newroz celebrations. Eren revealed that 24 women were detained before the celebrations and 11 of them were remanded in custody. Search warrants were issued for 36 women politicians, 17 of whom were then detained. “Our friends were prevented from participating in the Newroz celebrations,” Eren said.

The lawyer also remarked that the police did not allow numerous people into the area, citing traditional colourful dresses and bandages. He noted that there were also detentions over the dresses and bandages. Eren mentioned the talks held with the security authorities before the celebrations and cited them as saying that checkpoints would be increased to make the entrances comfortable for the participants. “However, policemen intervened with gas and batons. Despite this, people made it to the Newroz area,” he added.

Eren noted that there is a de facto ban on Newroz, noting that nearly 500 people were detained on Newroz Day and 80 of them were minors. The detainees were taken to different police stations and kept outside in cold weather for hours. Eren added that they would prepare a detailed report in the coming days. The lawyer disclosed that some of the children were released in the evening, some at night, and some were released after their blood samples were taken.

## HPG reports intensive Turkish attacks on guerrilla areas in South Kurdistan

ANF | BEHDINAN | 22 MARCH 2022

The People's Defense Forces (HPG) released a statement concerning the latest Turkish attacks, saying; “The invading Turkish army, troubled with the spectacular Newroz celebrations of our people and guerrilla forces, carried out intense attacks on the Medya Defense Zones.”

The HPG Press Centre released the following information pertaining to the latest attacks of the invading Turkish state:

“The people of Kurdistan flocked to the Newroz areas in the spirit of resistance and victory of our guerrilla forces that developed historic resistance against all the attacks of the invading Turkish army in Mamrešo, Zendura, Girê Sor and Werxelê. Our guerrilla forces also celebrated Newroz Day with enthusiastic and spectacular events. The invading Turkish army, troubled with the spectacular Newroz celebrations of our people and guerrilla forces, carried out intense attacks on the Medya Defense Zones. Our forces suffered no casualties during the Turkish attacks.

The details of the attacks are as follows:

On March 12, between 20:15 and 23:00, the Werxelê area in the Avaşîn region was bombed with heavy weapons.

On March 14, at 07:40, the vicinity of the Sêdarê village in the Garê area was shelled 3 times by Turkish fighter jets and by howitzers fired from the outposts in the Girê Bihar of the Zap region.

On March 14, between 17:00 and 17:30, the Golka area of the Metîna region was shelled twice by Turkish fighter jets.

On March 14, between 16:45 and 17:30, the Werxelê area in the Avaşîn, the Saca area in the Zap region and the slopes of Girê Şehîd Şerîf in the Xakûrkê region were shelled 5 times by Turkish fighter jets.

On March 16, between 12:00 and 21:30, Turkish helicopters were reported on the Qaşura line of the Metîna region. The vicinities of Serarû, Êdinê, Dergelê and Deşîşê villages as well as Girê Koordîne and Kela Qumriyê were shelled by attack helicopters.

On March 16, at 17:50, the Girê Ortê slopes of the Metîna area and between 18:00 and 20:00 the Karker and Girê Cehennem areas of the Zap region were shelled 5 times by Turkish fighter jets.

On March 17, at 02:30, the Şehîd Şahin area of the Zap region was shelled twice by Turkish fighter jets.

On March 19, at 16:00, the Gundê Gûzê area in the Garê region was shelled twice by Turkish fighter jets. On the same day, between 16:00 and 18:00, the Gundê Fileha area of the Zap region was shelled twice by howitzers fired from the outposts on the border line, and the Kûnîşka area was shelled twice by Turkish fighter jets.

On March 20, between 00:30 and 02:30, the Werxelê area in the Avaşîn region was shelled with howitzers, and the Kela Bedewê area in the Zap region was shelled by attack helicopters.

On March 21, at 12:00, the Kafya area in the Garê region was shelled by Turkish fighter jets.

On March 21, between 09:00 and 12:00, the slopes of Girê Amediyê and Girê Bihar in the Zap region were shelled 3 times by Turkish fighter jets and howitzers fired from the outposts on the border line in the Girê FM area. On the same day, the Saca area of the Zap region was shelled twice by Turkish fighter jets.”

## At least 488 detained during Newroz celebrations

ANF | 22 MARCH 2022

Newroz was celebrated in more than 60 cities under the motto “Dem dema serkeftine ye (Now is the time to win)”. Freedom of Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan was the primary subject during the celebrations. More than 1 million people attended the Newroz festival in Amed (Diyarbakır) on Monday, March 21.

Despite all the attacks and crackdown by the AKP-MHP government, people embraced the celebrations. It is reported that at least 488 people were detained, 173 of them being minors.

Some of the rights violations at Newroz are as follows:

### Amed

On March 19 and 20, dozens of people were detained during the Newroz celebrations in Amed's districts. Numerous people were not allowed to the site of the central rally yesterday because of their traditional dresses with colours representing Kurds. Some artists also were not allowed to appear on Newroz stage due to their traditional dresses. Many people in Amed's districts were detained during the course of political extermination operations before the Newroz celebrations. Some of the detainees were beaten by police officers.

The Newroz celebration in Amed on March 21 started with police intervention. Tens of thousands of people were not allowed to go into the event area. The police attacked people at many points using gas, rubber bullets and water cannons. Some people were injured or fell ill following the brutal intervention. At least 300 people, 150 of whom are minors, were detained after the Newroz celebrations.

### Aydin

On March 20, artists Serhat Kural, Fesih Şahin, Nihat Yılmaz, Eyüp Yıldız, Sedat Kement, Gökhan Ölçer, Mervan Aktumur were detained over their songs in Kurdish after the Newroz celebration in Aydın's Efeler district. Five detainees were released on bail while Fesih Şahin was arrested and sent to Aydın E Type Closed Prison.

### Konya

On March 21, Hediye Yıldız, Serhat Levent, Hamide Kaya and Resul Hocaoğulları Meram, who attended the Newroz celebration in Konya downtown, were detained at check stops because of their traditional Kurdish dresses.

### Mardin

On March 19, police attacked the march after the Newroz celebration in Mardin's Kızıltepe district. Around 30 people, mostly children, were detained.

During the Newroz celebrations in Mardin's Nusaybin district on March 21, policemen entered the area and attempted to seize flags and make arrests. As a result of the public's reaction, policemen had to take a step back. However, police raided several houses in the evening hours after the Newroz celebration. At least 5 people were detained. Camera footage showed that policemen inflicted brutal violence on a person out on the street.

### **Sirnak**

During the Newroz celebrations in Silopi district of Şırnak on 20 March, 6 people carrying yellow, red and green flags were detained. Furthermore, HDP Şırnak Provincial Co-Chair Sabuha Akdağ was subjected to police violence when she refused a body search.

### **Nusaybin**

Jin News has also reported that there were many house raids in another Kurdish-majority city, Nusaybin (Nisêbîn), after the Newroz celebrations in the city that attracted tens of thousands of people on Monday.

Some individuals were beaten by the police during the house raids and many have been detained.

### **Adana**

During the Newroz celebrations in Adana on March 21, Yeni Yaşam newspaper employee Serhat Sezgin was detained while he was about to enter the event area. It is also reported that many people were detained for carrying yellow, red and green flags and chanting slogans.

### **Istanbul**

86 people, including 5 minors, were detained after the Newroz celebration in Istanbul on March 20.

### **Tekirdag**

In Tekirdağ on March 20, 9 people were detained due to a brawl that broke out after an nationalist-fascist group attempted to provoke the participants in the area where the celebration was held.

Again, 5 people who came to the area were detained on charges of “propagandizing for a terrorist organization” because of the slogans they chanted.

### **Gebze**

On March 19, 4 people were detained after the Newroz celebration in Kocaeli's Gebze district. Ramazan Öter, İhsan Öter, Eyüp Öter and Yusuf Demir were detained for “conducting propaganda for a (terrorist) organization” since they sang a national anthem during the celebration.

## Van

On March 20, 15 people were detained on the grounds that they chanted slogans in favour of Kurdish leader Öcalan in Van.

After a celebration held in Erciş district on March 17, 5 people were detained for allegedly “conducting propaganda for a (terrorist) organization”.

## Agri

On March 21, 10 people were detained over the slogans chanted in Ağrı.

## Yuksekoa

On March 21, a member of the Grup İsyân Ateşi (Fire of Rebellion Band) was detained during the Newroz celebration in Hakkari's Yüksekova district.

## Musicians detained for “forbidden songs” at Newroz celebration

ANF | AYDIN | 21 MARCH 2022

Seven musicians have been in police custody in the western Turkish city of Aydın since Sunday. The arrests took place following a Newroz celebration in the Efeler district. The people concerned, including singers Veysel Ciwan and Serhat Kural, are accused of having sung “forbidden songs”. It is not yet known which songs are involved.

Some of the musicians were taken into custody at the central bus station in Aydın as they were leaving the city, while others were collected at the airport. The detention period had initially been set at 24 hours in all cases. Questioning is expected to begin later today.

Arbitrary arrests of artists during celebrations of the Kurdish New Year, Newroz, are not uncommon. Detentions often happen in the run-up to the celebrations. In Istanbul, singer Çiya Şenses was temporarily detained during a police raid on Friday. According to the artist, the action was justified by a preliminary investigation from 2012. Şenses was released only on Saturday following a public prosecutor's questioning.

## ‘Release the children detained during Diyarbakır Newroz’

BIA NEWS DESK | ISTANBUL | 22 MARCH 2022

The Child Rights Center of the Diyarbakır Bar Association has released a statement on its social media account and demanded the release of the children detained during the Newroz celebrations in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeastern province of Diyarbakır.

Referring to the Newroz celebrations yesterday (March 21), the Diyarbakır Bar has said, “Nearly 100 children who wanted to celebrate the Newroz Feast were unlawfully detained by police. While the accusations related to the Newroz feast celebration are unlawful as per the right to peaceful assembly, just as it is unlawful to keep the children in detention room conditions in violation of the prohibition of ill treatment, the practice that violates their fundamental rights and freedoms must be swiftly abandoned and the children deprived of their freedom must be released”.

During the Newroz celebrations yesterday, police officers did not allow people to enter the Newroz celebration site in traditional Kurdish clothes. According to the statement of the Diyarbakır Security Directorate, 298 people were taken into custody during the celebrations.

## At least twenty detained in ongoing political extermination campaign

ANF | 22 MARCH 2022

Twenty people were taken into custody in various cities in Turkey as part of an investigation by the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office in Bolu, including lawyer Alişan Şahin. Şahin is a board member of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD), and his arrest took place at his home in Ankara. He was taken to the gendarmerie station in Yenimahalle district. What the proceedings are about is unknown so far; the file is subject to a confidentiality clause.

Only recently, proceedings were initiated against lawyers organized in the ÖHD for “membership in a terrorist organization,” and several members in Batman and Amed (Diyarbakır) were summoned. Again, nothing more specific can be learned about the proceedings due to a confidentiality order.

## Police violence after Newroz celebrations in Kızıltepe recorded on camera

ANF | MARDIN | 23 MARCH 2022

After the Newroz celebrations which saw the participation of tens of thousands of people in the Kızıltepe district of Mardin on 20 March, the police attacked the march organised by young people.

30 people were taken into custody, 18 of them children, and were later released, but images of police violence during the detention process emerged. In the images taken with a mobile phone camera, two young people who were taken into custody are kicked and exposed to violence by a police officer.

Police who were on duty at Mardin Provincial Security Directorate Security Branch, entered the area during the Newroz celebration in Nusaybin. Young people reacted to the police, who then started threatening people.

# Prisons

## Second death in suspicious circumstances in Turkish prison in one month

Two prisoners, both subjected to ill treatment of psychological torture and isolation have died in Iğdır S Type Prison leading to calls for investigations from families and human rights groups in Turkey.

Medya News | 22 March 2022

It was reported on Sunday that Sinan Kaya, a 28-year-old political prisoner who was serving his sentence for 'propaganda for a terrorist organisation' was found dead in his prison cell in Turkey's eastern province of Iğdır. It's been claimed by the prison administration that he committed suicide.

This is the second death in one month in Iğdır S Type Prison that the prison administration claimed resulted from suicide.

On the 20th of February, it was announced that Sezer Alan, again a young man, a non-political prisoner also committed suicide and died in the same prison.

His family later made a press statement in the İzmir branch of the Human Rights Association (İHD) declaring that Alan was sent to five different prisons and to Iğdır S Type Prison at last in August 2021, and that he suffered psychological pressure and was subjected to physical violence in all six prisons.

Alan had spoken to his family on 19 February for the last time, one day before his death, which his family recorded and made public with their statement. In this recording Alan is saying that he is not able to exercise his legal rights, and he'll commit suicide.

He says: "The prison director, the prison administration, and the prison tutor will bear the responsibility of my death. They've been pushing me to commit suicide (...) I'll kill myself today. The responsibility of my death will lie with these people."

Now only one month after that death Sinan Kaya, a 28 year old political prisoner imprisoned in Iğdır S Type Prison 8 months ago has also died, resulting again allegedly from suicide, the prison administration claims. Kaya was staying in solitary confinement. The prison administration called his family at night and told them that their son had committed suicide. It was announced that Kaya had a lung transfusion before he was sent to prison.

Kaya's family accepting condolences expressed that they did not believe that their son had committed suicide and requested that an investigation should be carried out.

The Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) tweeted saying: “Although we have asked many times “what is happening in İğdir F Type Prison?” the violations of rights have not stopped and deaths have begun to occur. 28 year old ill prisoner Sinan Kaya has lost his life under questionable circumstances.

## Osman Kavala remains in prison

BIANET/ANF | ISTANBUL | 21 MARCH 2022

Arrested in the Silivri Prison for 1,602 days, Osman Kavala as well as Mücella Yapıcı, Çiğdem Mater, Ali Hakan Altınay, Mine Özerden, Can Atalay, Tayfun Kahraman and Yiğit Ali Ekmekçi faced their fifth hearing in the Gezi trial at the İstanbul 13th High Criminal Court today (March 21).

Osman Kavala, the only arrested defendant of the case, attended the hearing via video conference by using the Audio and Visual Information System (SEGBİS) while the other defendants were present in the courtroom. The hearing was followed by nearly 200 people, including consulate officials, NGOs and journalists.

While the final ruling was expected to be handed down at today's hearing, the court board has given time to defenders and their lawyers until April 22, 2022 as they objected, requesting time to make statements as to the accusations. The court has rejected the requests to extend the investigation and ruled that Osman Kavala's detention shall continue.

At the hearing, the rights defenders made their defense as to the accusations expressed in the final opinion as to the accusations pronounced by Prosecutor Edip Şahiner on March 4 between the hearings.

Before the defense statements, Can Atalay, a lawyer and defendant of the case, wanted to make a statement as to the procedure. He had a brief argument with the judge in the meantime. Atalay said that no defense statements could be made without the deficiencies in the procedure being rectified. Atalay said, “If we had not objected, your board would not have even taken our statements as to the reversal. You took our statements as to the reversal by insistently calling them 'defense'.”

Addressing the judges, Atalay asked, “Dear judges; what judicial activities have you undertaken in our file?”. He said, “We defended not ourselves, but Gezi. We will continue defending Gezi”. He added, “We want to give an answer to the accusations, but first hold a trial”.

He asked, “You listed a number of accusations in your indictment, yet how did you prepare a legal opinion without completing the necessary procedural actions? And how are we then to present a defense?”

### ‘It is not right to reach a verdict’

Kavala's lawyer, Köksal Bayraktar, took the floor afterwards. He said, “You had the defendants' statements at the 30th High Criminal Court repeated and did nothing else. You did not address the merits”.

“You now aim to directly reach a verdict. My client is imprisoned for more than 4 years, and the court fails to fulfill the procedure,” he said, adding, “We are faced with something that does not happen in any court

case. Though there is the prosecutor's office, ministers intervene in the trial. They say, 'We are 700 complainants but even a single one of them has not been brought to court. As this is the case, it is not right to reach a verdict'.

### **Lawyers requested time for statements**

Taking the floor, Ali Hakan Altınay's lawyer, Tora Pekin, said, "Not a single piece of evidence is brought to the file or discussed. You rejected all demands for the collection of evidence. What would you think about the reaching of a verdict in a case file where no evidence is discussed?"

Tora Pekin reminded the court that Turkey requested time up to 6 months from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in relevant detailed cases and asked how this court could expect a final defense to be prepared in two weeks; Pekin demanded time.

Can Atalay, Mücella Yapıcı and Tayfun Kahraman's lawyer Evren İşler also stated, "In whichever way you 're-evaluate' this file, it is impossible to reach a verdict at this stage. We demand closer investigation of the problematic evidence, tapes and voice recordings".

Taking the floor after lawyer Evren İşler, defendant Çiğdem Mater's lawyer Hürrem Sönmez briefly said, "In the prosecutor's opinion, there are sentences that affirm, 'It has been understood...' ... Regarding my client, it is stated that, 'It has been understood that her documentary was left incomplete because the Gezi insurrection failed'. I, as her lawyer, don't know such a reason. How did you 'understand'?"

Speaking at the hearing, Yiğit Aksakoğlu's lawyer, Serdar Laçın, also requested time to prepare his statement regarding the prosecutor's opinion, and also requested an extension of the inquiry.

### **Osman Kavala: No information, no effort**

Via SEGBİS video link, Osman Kavala stated that he agreed with his lawyers' requests for the extension of the inquiry.

The presiding judge asked Osman Kavala of his view regarding the prosecutor's view, Osman Kavala briefly said: "There is no information in the case file related to the accusation of spying that I face, nor is their any effort on the prosecutor's side to find such information."

His lawyer İlkan Koyuncu spoke afterwards: "You accused an individual with spying, you have declared him a traitor. Now, in the prosecutor's opinion, this accusation itself is rendered an element of another crime."

### **No change in the interim ruling**

Following the statements of the lawyers against the prosecutor's demand for the continuation of Osman Kavala's detention, the judge declared a recess.

Handing down its interim ruling afterwards, the court board has given time to the defendants and their lawyers time "for one final occasion" to prepare their statements and ruled for the continuation of Osman

Kavala's detention. The court board has also rejected the requests for extending the investigation. The next hearing will be held on 22 April at 10 am.

## 20-year-old prisoner died suspiciously in Van jail

ANF | HAKKARI | 23 MARCH 2022

Can Güder was just 20. He died under suspicious circumstances in Van F Type Closed Prison.

The prison administration called the prisoner's family on Tuesday morning and reported that their son had passed away. It was recorded that Can Güder, who was taken to the Centenary Forensic Medicine Institute (ATK) without his family and lawyer, died as a result of a "heart attack".

The family, who received the body of Güder after the ATK procedures, took it to Yüksekova district of Hakkari.

According to the information obtained from the family, Can Güder did not have any chronic illness, did not use any medication, and his death was seen as suspicious.

On the other hand, it was learned that Can Güder was tried as a "Child Driven to Crime" and was sentenced to 18 years. Güder was one of the prisoners who took part in the hunger strike that was launched 3 years ago to break the isolation of Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan.

On 20 March, 28-year-old Sinan Kaya, who was in the Iğdır S Type Closed Prison, also died suspiciously.

The police blocked both the cemetery and the hospital and prevented journalists from taking photos and videos.

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Hakkari Deputy Sait Dede and HDP Yüksekova District Organization executives attended the funeral.

# Human Rights

## IPPNW delegation visits the Justice Vigil in Urfa

ANF | URFA | 23 MARCH 2022

A delegation of IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War) visited the vigil of Emine and Ferit Şenyaşar in Urfa on Wednesday. Emine Şenyaşar is the widow of Hacı Esvet Şenyaşar and mother of their joint sons Celal and Adil. The three men were victims of lynchings carried out on the sidelines of a campaign tour of AKP deputy Ibrahim Halil Yıldız by his armed bodyguards and relatives in the

district of Suruç just days before the June 2018 parliamentary and presidential elections. Turkish judicial authorities have shown no interest in solving the murders completely. Yıldız and his mafia gang continue to enjoy a life of freedom, and only one of 23 attackers has been convicted so far.

### “The massacre took place in front of my mother’s eyes”

Emine Şenyaşar and her son Ferit, who was also injured in the attack, have been sitting outside the Palace of Justice in Urfa every day since March 9 last year to demand punishment for the killers of their family members. Today, mother and son also came to the province from Suruç, 42 kilometers away, to demand justice. The vigil has so far been supported by thousands of people with solidarity visits.

The IPPNW delegation was accompanied by lawyer Fazilet Taştan Arserim, vice president of the Urfa Bar Association. Ferit Şenyaşar told the delegation about what happened on June 14, 2018, and showed a photo of an ambulance that was also attacked at the time. The survivor said that the massacre was being covered up because an AKP deputy was involved. Yet the evidence is clear, Ferit Şenyaşar said: “A doctor posted footage of the massacre at the hospital on his social media account. The massacre took place in front of my mother.”

Dr. Gisela Penteker is a physician in Lower Saxony. She has been active in the peace movement for decades and is the Turkey representative of the German section of the IPPNW. In this context, she has long participated in delegation trips to the Kurdish region of Turkey, to Northern Syria/Rojava and to Iraq/Southern Kurdistan, in order to get an up-to-date picture of the political and social situation in this region on the spot. Penteker stated that the delegation will include the case of the Şenyaşar family in its report on the delegation trip.

Meanwhile, the meeting in front of the Urfa Courthouse was filmed by the police in their usual manner. When the delegation members protested, the police officers moved away from the immediate area. The Turkish authorities and the AKP deputy involved are uncomfortable with the permanent vigil. 71-year-old Emine Şenyaşar has been taken into custody several times, and several trials are also underway against her for alleged insulting offenses. Most of the lawsuits have been brought by Ibrahim Halil Yıldız, the main perpetrator of the Şenyaşars' murders. In February, Emine Şenyaşar was fined in one of these trials — for insulting a public official.

### The Massacre of the Şenyaşar Family

Ten days before the parliamentary election on June 24, 2018, AKP deputy Ibrahim Halil Yıldız, accompanied by relatives and bodyguards, visited the Şenyaşar family farm in Suruç. After a verbal argument, Yıldız's bodyguards opened fire. Mehmet, Celal and Adil Şenyaşar were taken to a hospital with gunshot wounds, where two of them were ultimately murdered. The coroner's autopsy of Celal Şenyaşar revealed bullet impacts from at least six firearms of various calibers. In Adil Şenyaşar's case, cuts and stab wounds were found in 14 places on the body, as well as impact wounds with hard objects. The report said that Adil had been subjected to “extreme violence.” Seventeen bullets of various calibers were found in his body. Of these projectiles, five were fatal. Only two of the bullets were not fired from close range. The father, Hacı Esvet Şenyaşar, who had rushed to the hospital on foot, was severely injured there by blows to the head from an oxygen tank. He died a day later, while the funeral of his two sons was attacked by police with tear gas.

## Human rights activist sentenced to six years in prison on terror charges

ANF | AMED | 23 MARCH 2022

Human rights activist and trade unionist Firat Akdeniz has been sentenced to six years and three months in prison in Amed (tr. Diyarbakir) for alleged membership of a terrorist organization. The case against him was brought after he himself had filed criminal charges against police officers who had beaten him after a demonstration in 2019.

Akdeniz is a member of the education union Eğitim Sen and the Human Rights Association (IHD). In the IHD, he is involved in the commission for “disappeared persons” and calls for a political reappraisal and coming to terms with the past. During protests against the removal of elected mayors in Amed in August 2019, he was beaten up by dozens of police officers and subsequently detained in hospital.

Akdeniz did not attend the trial before the 11th Heavy Penal Court in Amed and was represented by lawyers from the IHD. The trial was observed by board members of the Eğitim Sen trade union and by civilian police officers. Lawyer Lütfüllah Yalçın said in his plea that the background of the prosecution was his client's criminal complaint against the police officers. As evidence of his alleged membership in a terrorist organization, even an intercepted telephone conversation with an HDP deputy who had wished Akdeniz a speedy recovery was used.

## Articles

### Newroz: Kurds' rebirth from their own ashes

MEDYA NEWS | 21 MARCH 2022 | BY ERTUĞRUL KÜRKCÜ

Kurds, wherever they exist across the globe, celebrated Newroz on March 21, yet nowhere the celebrations carried the political import it had in Northern Kurdistan, where an estimated 20 million Kurds, as citizens of Turkey, have been striving for the recognition of their national rights for many decades.

Indeed, Newroz -or Nauryz, Navruz, Nawrouz, Nevruz, Nooruz, Novruz, Nowrouz, Nowruz as called by other peoples- is celebrated for over 3000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions and is not specific to Kurdish culture, it emerges out of the ages of traditions of the pagan cultures of celebrating the arrival of spring and thus of the first day (New-roz=new day) of the New Year.

Nevertheless, Newroz, as celebrated by the Kurds, is uniquely perceived as part of a narrative what emerges out of the mythology of Kurdish renaissance—the “legend of Kawa the blacksmith”. In its Kurdish context

Newroz is not celebrated simply as an act of gratitude to Nature for its gifts, nor as an objective relationship between humans and the nature, but subjectively, as a people's own attainment of their right to enjoy the gifts of Nature, as a people's own reconquering of its Natural rights from a tyrant -Dehaq- through a protractive collective struggle led by a craftsman – the blacksmith. Hence, Kurdish Newroz in its very origins is subjectively rooted to a people's fight for survival, who -on every 21 March- celebrate their victory for having liberated themselves from the yoke of a tyrant who for generations had denied them the right to enjoy the fruits of Nature. Thus, spring in Kurdish mythology and for the Kurdish mindset is not God-given, but it is an human achievement, an aspect of their specific relationship with Nature, a right gained through political struggle. By its very nature the Newroz narrative is a purely political interpretation of human (Kurd's) existence: "We fight, therefore we exist!"

This provides the background to the inflammable material in Kurds' unique perception of Newroz, and of its perpetual renaissance in further politicized forms throughout the different phases of the development of the Kurdish history.

Kurds with 40 M (est) population are the biggest people on earth without a state. Their rights as a whole are yet to be internationally recognized and raised by their own representatives in international organizations.

However as declared by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "With relation to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Nowruz was inscribed as an element in 2009, and extended in 2016, on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, at the joint initiative of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

"In 2010, the 'International Day of Nowruz' was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/64/253. This Resolution welcomes the efforts of Member States where Nowruz is celebrated to preserve and develop the culture and traditions related to Nowruz, and encourages Member States to make efforts to raise awareness about Nowruz and to organize annual events in commemoration of this festivity."

Obviously the UNGA resolution tasks also the Turkish government -a signatory to the initiative of listing Newroz among "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity"- "to preserve and develop the culture and traditions related to Newroz."

Yet the weekend and the day of Newroz, 21 March 2022 in particular, in contrast to its UNESCO commitments, has witnessed a renewed display of official hypocrisy in Turkey. Let aside any official undertaking "to organize annual events in commemoration of this festivity" on part of the Turkish state, Kurds were denied the right to celebrate Newroz in their own initiatives, on the same day in every city or district, and they had to suffice with a part of the prospective total impact on each day. As for the festivities, instead of being provided with facilities in central squares by the public authorities, they were pushed to remote areas in the suburbs.

Nationwide, the event was turned into a security risk rather more than a popular festival. Wherever the people were still able to overcome the security and bureaucracy hurdles and organize an outdoor rally – in the midst of the worst cold wave of the year across the country, under heavy snow and cold – the roads to

the events were cut off from traffic, the participants were intercepted for arbitrary searches; their gear was not welcomed, their banners and placards were banned and seized – yet Turkey witnessed the most populous, crowded and energetic Newroz celebrations since 2015.

In 2022 Newroz celebrations across metropolitan areas of Turkey (and of North Kurdistan) millions – on 19, 20, 21 March- have taken to the streets, gathered in the rallies and festivities under the catchword “Dem dema serkeftinê ye” [It’s time to win now] and dedicated the Newroz 2022 celebrations to the “Freedom of Öcalan”.

Once again, the Kurdish narrative of Newroz has taken its particular path with renewed synergy. Northern Kurds, who were denied political rights, political organizations, language and culture in the first 50 years of the Republic of Turkey, had found their way to the public sphere through the revival of the Kurdish identity in cultural forms that followed the 1980s’ Kurdish insurgency in the Kurdish countryside. Decades of “graveyard silence” – the outcome of the successive Kurdish massacres of the 1920s and the extensive purges that followed: the ban on the language, the culture, the names, the costumes – was teared in the 1990s through the revival of Newroz celebrations in the Kurdish countryside – the home to insurgency.

Inevitably, the Turkish state would assume the part of Dehaq in the Kurdish social imagination when the brutal suppression of 1992 Newroz celebrations in the Kurdish towns of Cizre and Nusaybin had left behind tens of deaths, mostly women and children. Hence, throughout the whole course of the Kurdish Question in Turkey the legend of Kawa has become the reality while the reality in turn has confirmed the legend along with the Kurdish renaissance.

30 years on, Kurds have become the most active element in Turkey’s politics, their narrative of their own being — contrary to stereotype political expectations and prejudices and instead of fanning petty nationalism, and dividing the political dissent along national lines – have induced the Kurdish masses to bring about the most novel political organization of Turkey’s political history- the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), the joint political party of Turkey’s left and democratic forces and the Kurdish liberation movement.

It is not surprising then, Kurdish people 30 years after the Newroz massacres of Nusyabin and Cizre dedicates 2022 Newroz celebrations to Abdullah Öcalan, the incarcerated leader of the people, who was the mastermind behind the new course of Kurdish politics inspired by the Kurdish communal heritage. Kurds, in the 30 years of relentless struggle Newroz by Newroz, are now reborn from their ashes to provide a common narrative for social liberation to all communalist forces of the globe. They are indebted to no power on earth or in the heavens but their own will and vigorous struggle, inspired by their own egalitarian heritage and the lessons of past revolutions.

**Newroz 2022 millions of Kurds declare their determination to continue the struggle.**

YENİ ÖZGÜR POLITIKA | 24 MARCH 2022 | BY FERDA CETIN

Newroz 2022 will be remembered for how it differed from past celebrations in terms of context, attendance and messages it gave.

In Kurdistan, Turkish cities, and in Europe, participation was high and enthusiastic. They elevated the political impact of Newroz 2022 and the power of its messages.

It was not just a cultural activity where Kurds danced around fires, none of the previous ones were either.

Newroz was celebrated in diverse settings, thousands of miles apart, by millions of Kurds coming from various socioeconomic and political backgrounds. They all had similar sentiments, desires, and demands.

In this context, Newroz celebrations could be said to constitute a national congress where the Kurdish people declared their will en masse.

In thousands of villages, towns and cities, Kurds declared what kind of a life they want, what they demand, and what they reject. They have manifested their will.

The audience for this declaration was not just the Turkish state, or to Iran, Iraq and Syria which have all colonised Kurdistan as well. It also included international powers that keep Kurds and Kurdistan in this state of limbo.

The international powers that designed the Middle East launched a plan in 1998 to disband the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This plan continues today, under various aspects of politics.

Demands and calls made in Newroz are addressed primarily to the United States, which formed the strategic framework for this plan and took the lead in its execution, the European Union, which was the executing force in practice, and NATO.

In the Newroz celebrations the Kurdish people have declared that they are aware of the link between what they call the "International Conspiracy", how Kurds conceptualise the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, and the "Collapse Plan", which was devised in a National Security Council meeting in Oct. 2014.

Kurds showed that they are aware that these two were joined together into a single plan, the plan to disband the PKK.

They also said Kurds will not let this plan succeed.

Millions have demanded the freedom of the Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan, and clearly and precisely stated that they are loyal to the PKK, and that they will continue their support for the PKK's struggle.

The Newroz celebrations told the United States and Europe that the plan to involve some Kurds in the plan to disband the PKK would not work. It also included a call to international powers that are part of the same coalition with Kurds in Rojava to refrain from abusing this partnership.

One of the most important messages in this year's Newroz was that Kurds will not allow international powers involved with them in Rojava to turn Turkey's possible attacks into a subject of blackmail or good relations with Kurds to be used towards the disbanding of the PKK.

In Amed, Hawreman, Qamishlo, Sulaimaniya, Istanbul, Frankfurt, Paris, London and hundreds of other locations, Newroz celebrations have told the international powers that they cannot conduct activities to “transform Kurds from the inside out” by dividing the Kurdish people, sowing seeds of dissent, etc.

The United States and Europe still want to continue to frame a distinction between “good Kurds” and “bad Kurds”. The Kurdish people have told them their policies have no reflection among the people, and that the “good Kurd” they want is a trait of mere collaboration that is open to abuse.

The national unity of all Kurds in the face of the strategic cooperation to disband the PKK between Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is also among the most important calls made in Newroz this year.

The Turkish state launched airstrikes immediately after Newroz. The AKP government’s detentions, arrests and operations and statements by KDP circles to diminish the grandeur and impact of Newroz are complimentary to each other.

The unease among AKP and KDP circles shows that they have read the messages of Newroz celebrations correctly. That they have understood the messages well.

Millions of Kurds of all ages have declared their awareness and determination to continue the struggle once again. They have put forth that they are loyal to their Leadership and their movement, simply and without the shadow of a doubt.

Newroz 2022 was not just a celebration of hopes, demands and wishes.

With their capacity and dynamics, the Kurdish people have shown that they are ready to take on a transformative and foundational role for a free, equal and just life in all of the Middle East, not just in Kurdistan.



# Who Are We?

The International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan” was founded in March 1999, a month after Öcalan’s abduction from Kenya and his imprisonment by Turkey. Since its initial foundation, the International Initiative struggled for Abdullah Öcalan’s release from prison so that he can play his rightful role in the establishment of a just peace between the Turkish state and Kurdistan’s Workers Party (PKK). The International Initiative also aimed at contributing to the repairing of the ties between the Kurdish and Turkish peoples, as well as all other peoples of the Middle Eastern regions.

In order to achieve its aims, the International Initiative followed several related paths. Influencing international and national audiences through international campaigns to interfere with Turkish state’s policies towards Abdullah Öcalan has been one of these paths. A second area of work the International Initiative committed itself is the dissemination of Öcalan’s views through art, publications and conferences. Finally, the International Initiative has also been active in raising awareness for Öcalan’s conditions and the human rights violations he faces through reports, fact-finding delegations and lobbying.

## Campaigns

The International Initiative organizes signature campaigns to influence the policies towards Öcalan. One such campaign which was launched in 2012 by one thousand preliminary signatories including Gerry Adams, Prof. Antonio Negri, Prof. Immanuel Wallerstein, Prof. Achin Vanaik, and other intellectuals, politicians, MPs, and NGOs from South America, Europe, Asia, Russia, and the Middle East. The campaign reached 10,328,623 signatures and may be the biggest signature campaign for the freedom of a political prisoner that the world has ever seen. It significantly challenged the isolation that was enforced on Öcalan and possibly paved the ways for the peace talks that the Turkish state and Öcalan led between 2013 and 2015.

The International Initiative also organizes video campaigns that educate the public on Öcalan’s life-story, his prison conditions and the demands for his freedom.

## Publications

The International Initiative translates, edits and publishes books written by Öcalan in different languages including in English, German, French, Spanish and Arabic.

It compiles brochures from his works on specific topics, such as democratic confederalism or women’s freedom.

It edits books on Öcalan that discuss his main ideas.

The International Initiative also publishes regular reports on Öcalan’s prison conditions and his isolation.

## Conferences

The International Initiative organizes biannual conferences and invites scholars, activists, students and politicians to discuss Öcalan’s ideas in order to initiate a conversation between different Movements around the world.

## Delegations

Every year on February 15<sup>th</sup>, which is the date of the abduction of Abdullah Öcalan, the International Initiative organizes a group of internationally acclaimed people to take a trip to Turkey for a fact finding mission and publicizes their findings.

## Lobbying

The International Initiative lobbies in the European Council, CPT and other international organizations against the human rights violations against Abdullah Öcalan and his total isolation in İmralı prison.

## Art for Öcalan

This campaign aims to express the relationship between Abdullah Öcalan, Kurdish people, freedom and women’s freedom and to educate the wider public on the past and present of the Kurdish people. The International Initiative has already collected art from Brazil, South Africa, USA, South America, Italy, Germany as well as Kurds from different parts of Kurdistan. These works have been printed in postcards, t-shirts and canvas and made available for solidarity sale.

Contact e-mail: [imralipost@freecocalan.org](mailto:imralipost@freecocalan.org)

Websites: [freecocalan.org](http://freecocalan.org) | [ocalanbooks.com](http://ocalanbooks.com) || Videos: [vimeo.com/freecocalan](https://vimeo.com/freecocalan)