

THE İMRALI POST

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

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PKK releases 50th Anniversary Declaration

BEHDINAN | 15 MARCH 2022

The PKK Central Committee issued a statement to mark the 50th victory anniversary of the Apoist movement.

The statement reads as follows:

“As the Kurdistan Freedom Movement and the Kurdish people, we are experiencing a new Newroz celebration. Newroz is our festival of unity, resistance and freedom. It is one of the most ancient freedom holidays in human history. With the breakthroughs of Leadership and the PKK, Newroz celebrations have become much more beautiful, meaningful and in accordance with its essence. Just nature opens itself to flowering in the spring, we also renew and restructure ourselves at every Newroz; we have been filled with the spirit and consciousness of unity, resistance, and freedom.

We, as a people, a movement, our friends we are experiencing the Newroz of 2022 with such an intensity of emotion and thought. We welcome the new Newroz year on this basis. There are enthusiastic Newroz celebrations in four parts of Kurdistan and all over the world. Wherever there is a patriotic Kurd, Newroz is always celebrated. The Newroz year is being welcomed with enthusiasm and determination. We believe that the feeling of celebration will continue throughout the year and that our struggle for freedom and democracy will be continuously improved by making each day as a Newroz-new day.

From this point of view, we congratulate the Newroz to Leader Apo, all our party comrades, our patriotic people, and our revolutionary-democratic friends, and wish them great success in the new Newroz year. We salute the great freedom struggle aiming for the physical freedom of Leader Apo that was initiated by the leadership of the Historical İmralı Resistance and continues with heroic resistance at the mountains, at the cities and at the dungeons. We commemorate all our heroic martyrs with respect, love and gratitude in particular relation to our great Newroz martyrs Mazlum Doğan and Zekiye Alkan. We celebrate the National Heroes Week of our people and once again commemorate all our heroic martyrs National Heroes Mazlum Doğan and Mahsum Korkmaz . We call to our people and friends to celebrate each day of this year as a Newroz, with full resistance!

As it is known, Newroz-2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the Leadership Leap and the starting process of foundation of the PKK. Thus, this Newroz year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Apoist Leadership March and the PKK. The Apoist Leadership Leap took place in Newroz 1973. The Apoist Group, which formed the basis of the PKK, was established with a meeting held in Ankara's Çubuk Dam area during Newroz 1973. Thus, the resistance and enlightening truth of the Apoist Freedom Movement emerged against the oppression and darkness of the fascist-military coup of March 12, 1971. [...]

Please read the full Statement at: <https://anfenglishmobile.com/features/pkk-releases-statement-to-mark-50th-victory-anniversary-of-apoist-movement-58683>



PKK: Germany needs an independent Kurdish policy

The German government is trying to reposition its place and role in world politics. The PKK believes that this should also involve overcoming the anti-Kurdish prohibitionist practice and embarking on the path of an independent Kurdish policy.

BEHDINAN | 19 MARCH 2022

In a statement on Germany's new administration, the Foreign Relations Committee of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) highlighted the necessity for a new and distinct Kurdish policy.

The statement remarked that the justifications offered for the PKK ban in Germany were not appropriate and that these reasons had also disappeared, and there was a call for Germany to contribute to the resolution of the Kurdish question. While the PKK desired a new chapter to be opened, particularly with reference to the Kurds, it stated that they were ready for dialogue at all levels.

Appeal to the German state on the occasion of Newroz

The statement of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) Foreign Relations Committee is as follows:

“The Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) have formed a new administration in Germany at the end of Angela Merkel's 16-year administration. The new government stated that it would base its foreign policy on “values”, including democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Germany's past governments harmed our people and movement significantly through their foreign policy, backing Turkey's anti-democratic practices. This policy not only retarded the resolution of the Kurdish question but also affected social harmony in Germany, the country where the vast majority of diaspora Kurds reside. We believe that a new approach is now required. We would like to deliver this message to the public in honour of the upcoming Newroz holiday.

Our fight is against inequality, oppression, and injustice

As a movement, we place a high value on international solidarity. Since its foundation, the PKK has been a movement that promotes human solidarity and coexistence. Our movement has never equated any people or group, particularly the Turkish people, with the sovereign state, and while fighting in self-defence against state aggression and denial, it has been founded on growing closer to and collaborating with the

peoples. On March 21, 2013, in front of the international media and millions of Kurds, our President, Mr Abdullah Öcalan, stated, “Our fight has not been, and cannot be, against any race, religion, sect, or group. Our struggle has been against tyranny, ignorance, unfairness, backwardness, and all forms of oppression.” In his defence writings, with his notion of a “democratic nation,” which he describes as one of the most important results of our history of struggle, he provides a theoretical structure to peace and common existence of peoples and places it at the centre of our new paradigm

A new understanding of nation

This theory has led to a novelty in Turkey and the Middle East, where political conditions are characterized by ethnic and religious polarization and hate speech. In Kurdistan, this novelty finds expression, on the one hand, in the establishment of democratic platforms or alliances, under whose umbrella the entire pluralism of society comes together and works for a democratic life. On the other hand, it finds expression in the revolution of Rojava, where different ethnic and religious groups have created the example of how they can live together in their diversity without fighting each other. These examples have only become possible through a new understanding of nation. The democratic nation, in contrast to the understanding of the nation-state, does not place a language or ethnicity at its center. It is based on a collective society that has created free individuals and communities at their own will. In this way, the theory of the democratic nation overcomes the political philosophy based on identities and the nation-state, and allows all peoples, communities and oppressed people to form a common nation. The fact that a genocidal force like ISIS could be defeated through the resistance of peoples who came together under the umbrella of a democratic nation cannot be explained by military factors alone. Behind this is also the unconditional belief in an alternative life.

At the center of this new way of life are common life, pluralism of faith communities, and women's freedom. The struggle for women's liberation occupies a central place in our resistance and in our social relations. We understand women's freedom as the first step towards all other freedoms. The impact of women's revolution is evident not only in the Kurdish society but in the whole Middle East. The woman is not only a pioneer in the struggle against any regression and a defender of social life, she is also a significant force in the political and civil society work through the system of gender parity, dual leadership and equal representation.

We are a secular movement

We are a secular movement. We approach all faiths equally, but at the same time, we work to protect those ethnic and religious communities that are under threat. For this reason, we fought a great battle in 2014 to protect the Yazidi Kurds from genocide in Shengal. The fight that the PKK waged in Shengal against ISIS was also an issue in the German Bundestag. Although these discussions did not last long, the irrelevance of the PKK ban was publicly discussed in 2014, albeit briefly. Even German arms deliveries to the PKK were an issue at the time. Various deputies, including from the governing parties, expressed their gratitude to the PKK and advocated direct talks with our party. Subsequently, the attack on Kobanê took place. Here, the fight of the YPG and YPJ, but also the support of guerrilla fighters of the PKK, who had moved to defend the city, together with the help of the International Coalition, led to the inhuman organization of ISIS suffering a significant defeat.

Our struggle is against those who invade our country

We are the freedom movement of the peoples who are at home in the geographical area of Kurdistan. Our problem is with the regressive, fascist nation-states and their local collaborators who reject the existence of the Kurds, their identity and their equal life. Therefore, our struggle is limited to the struggle with those actors who have occupied our homeland. We have no interest or intention in taking our struggle to other countries, let alone the countries of Europe. Many independent observers have confirmed that where our struggle has had its effect, nationalist, racist, discriminatory or patriarchal discourses have been eliminated, while a rhetoric of equality, which is also willing to confront its own history, has gained prominence.

While we are in a struggle against the colonialist forces, we are also striving to initiate democratic change together with the progressive actors of the respective countries. Instead of the goal of changing the existing borders of the region, we are pursuing the intention of democratizing the ruling countries and building democratic autonomy for our society. The struggle for freedom of our society is developing, connected and in step with the struggle for democracy in the respective countries. Thus, our struggle has developed until today through cooperation with the democratic actors in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran.

The armed struggle arose from a necessity

The armed character of our struggle has not come out of free choice, but out of a necessity. Both our struggle and the reality of life have shown that the atmosphere in which even a Kurdish name was banned, in which the fascism of the military coup of September 12, 1980 bulldozed any progressive movement, in which inhuman torture methods were practiced on prisoners in the dungeon of Amed (Diyarbakir), could only be overcome through armed resistance. At the same time, when the conditions were right, we responded positively countless times to the calls of civilian organizations as well as democratic countries and declared ceasefires to pave the way for a peaceful solution. However, each of these ceasefires failed due to the attacks of the Turkish state. From 2013 to 2015, we even withdrew our armed forces from the territory of Turkey, created a peaceful atmosphere and put the political struggle at the center. During this period, the HDP was also founded and received great popular support. However, Turkish President Erdoğan “froze” the resolution process in his words and in 2015 he initiated a phase in which he razed entire Kurdish towns to the ground, destroyed historical sites, and burned alive injured and elderly people who sought shelter in the basements of their homes. The February 2017 report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights described the conditions in Kurdish cities as a result of this war as “apocalyptic.” Despite these atrocities committed by the Turkish government, we have not abandoned our principles of democratic struggle, either in the Kurdish areas or in Europe.

Against violent of illegal forms of action

Most Kurds living in Europe are people who experienced suffering in Kurdistan and had to flee from the oppressive policies of the Turkish state. In order to direct the eyes of the world public to the oppression and suffering in Kurdistan, they organize various actions. Our central aim is that the meetings, conferences and protest actions that take place in this context are carried out in the spirit of the cause in a democratic framework. Our goal is that all forms of action remain within the legitimate democratic framework. Neither do we want nor do we accept that anyone resorts to violent or illegal forms of action. As a move-

ment, we are bound by the statements that our organizational leadership has made in the past on this issue. We would like to emphasize that again at this point.

Prohibition policy intensified

Parallel to this, Germany continues to pursue a policy of repression and prohibition against our movement. Since the enactment of the so-called PKK ban on November 26, 1993, this policy has been intensified. This ban has been extended so much that, today flags, colors, slogans and even names are affected. The prohibition practice goes so far that media institutions and cultural associations are searched and banned, or that archives that are culturally important for Kurdish society are confiscated by security forces. This practice of banning has had an impact on Kurdish society, and thousands of people have been harmed by it in various ways. While the German state is implementing this prohibition practice, it is not only extending its own law almost beyond recognition, but is also trampling on the rights of its citizens as enshrined in the Basic Law. When it comes to the Kurds, the claim of a democratic state quickly gives way to a state that places the police and the protection of the constitution at its center.

The paradigm shift of the PKK is not taken into account

The face of Germany that the Kurds see is that of the policy of prohibition. This face has no relation to the practice of our movement nor to the reality of our society. The justifications with which the ban is to be legitimized not only lack legitimacy, they have also become completely groundless in the course of the past. Especially against the background of the paradigmatic change that our movement has undergone in its more than 30-year history, Germany should overcome its approach based on the practice of banning. This would help Germany to build a proper relationship with the Kurdish society and at the same time open up in the Middle East.

No German-Turkish relations at the expense of the fundamental rights of Kurds

Historically, Germany bears no responsibility for the division of the Kurdish settlement areas into four parts. However, it has never questioned the British-French policy in the Middle East, which is based on the denial of Kurdish existence, or developed its own alternative approach. As a movement, we have no intention of harming or calling for the end of German-Turkish relations, which have a long history. That is not in line with our political course. However, we demand that these relations not be conducted at the expense of the fundamental rights of Kurdish society. Instead, relations should be maintained by Germany in a way that is in the interest of both the Kurdish and the Turkish people, and thus take on a productive and solution-oriented character. We expect that these relations will contribute to an end of the war, the achievement of a political solution and the democratization of Turkey. In our view, such a character in German-Turkish relations would also be more in Germany's interests. The existing PKK ban, on the other hand, serves a discourse that leads to a continuation of the clashes, to the justification of any violence against Kurdish society and to the persistence of Turkey in an anti-democratic state.

No end to the policy of blackmail without Turkey's democratization

The Turkish approach to the Kurdish question is based on annihilation and ethnic cleansing. This approach is not only applied within Turkish state borders, but also in Syria and Iraq. Turkey is largely responsible for the fact that the crisis in Syria has intensified so much within a very short period of time and

has led to the mass exodus of the Syrian population. It is well known that the Turkish government has subsequently used the refugees as a means of threat and blackmail against Germany and the entire EU. Without a peaceful political solution and a democratization of Turkey, there is no doubt that this blackmail policy will not come to an end either. But today, besides Germany's ban policy, the leadership of our movement on the EU terror list is one of the biggest obstacles to a political solution.

Take the path of a new and independent Kurdish policy

If the German government is able to move beyond its banning practices and play a constructive role in resolving the Kurdish question, it will strengthen Germany's influence as a democratic country. If not, the German government will continue to provide the justification basis for the anti-democratic, totalitarian and fascist practices of the Turkish state. The new federal government in Germany is trying to re-situate its place and role in world politics. We hope that in this context the practice of banning the Kurdish population will be urgently overcome and in its place the path of a new and independent Kurdish policy will be taken.

Put the claim “Dare more progress” into practice

The new coalition government has presented its partnership agreement to the public under the title “Dare more progress”. For this reason, it is also expected to bring about real change with bold steps. We believe that a new page should also be opened in this framework with regard to Kurdish society. The lifting of the ban, which harms the Kurds and Germany alike, would be an important starting point. Related to this, Germany could also take on a constructive mission in solving the Kurdish question, which would not only bring it closer to the Kurdish and Turkish population, but also contribute to peace and stability in the Middle East. Steps in this direction would also have an important meaning for democracy and stability in Europe. Our movement is ready for dialogue at all levels on these issues.”



PRISONS

Prisoners in Batman jail held for 5 hours out in the yard
despite snow and cold

BATMAN | 15 MARCH 2022

Vedat Duyuş (24), who was arrested and sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment in Antalya, where he went to work due to state terrorism implemented in the Nusaybin district of Mardin in 2016 under the name of curfew, asked for sensitivity about the inhumane practices they were subjected to.

In the phone call he made to his family, Duyuş talked about the violations of rights and asked them to call the Human Rights Association (IHD).

After the phone call, his brother Hunaf Duyuş said that Vedat's condition was not good.

Noting that the 20-minute phone call is arbitrarily reduced to 5, Duyuş added that they could not even ask his brother if he needed anything.

Hunaf Duyuş said: "The situation of political prisoners is not good. Letters and parcels are not given. They sent them back. The prisoners are under pressure. They are insulted. When they take them out to the ventilation, they close the door and they stay under the snow and rain for 5 hours."

Hunaf Duyuş said that the political prisoner asked the IHD to investigate the prison, and that his brother said that if the problems are not resolved, they will go on hunger strike.

Duyuş's mother, Fatma Duyuş, said that her son's ward was raided many times and his belongings were scattered all over the cell.

Fatma Duyuş stated that her son was given a two-month disciplinary penalty because of the phone call he made earlier. "Nobody has the right to do that to our children."



Hayri Karaş dies a few days after being released from prison

AMED | 16 MARCH 2022

Ill prisoner Hayri Karaş was held in Diyarbakır D Type Closed Prison and was released 10 days ago, despite the many appeals to release him because he was seriously ill. He passed away at Diyarbakır Training and Research Hospital, where he was treated for bowel cancer.

Hayri Karaş was buried by his relatives in the cemetery located in Dicle district.



Prisoners in Tekirdağ call off their hunger strike as prison administration agrees to their demands

TEKIRDAG | 17 MARCH 2022

Following the death of prisoner Vedat Erkmén in Tekirdağ No. 2 F Type Prison on 19 December, the other prisoners said that they feared for their safety and went on an indefinite non-alternating hunger strike.

According to the announcement made by the prisoners' families, the hunger strike was called off after 58 days after the Tekirdağ No. 2 F Type Prison administration declared that the prisoners' demands would be met.

Prisoners Ahmet Arif Yiyor, Habip Güler, Tufan İlbaş, Hüseyin Karadaş and Süleyman Uçakan went on an indefinite non-alternating hunger strike on 17 January, while Şahabettin Oğut, İlyas Yorgun and Ahmet Altay on 1 February. On 16 February, Ahmet Sürme, Kutbettin Onur and Yunus Konak joined the hunger strike.

The prisoners, as well as for safety, demanded that their personal belongings, radio, notebook, books and newspapers not be confiscated, and that arbitrary cell searches be stopped.

The prisoners also asked to put an end to strip searching and arbitrary moving of cells.



HDP: More ill prisoners have died in Turkey's prisons

ANKARA | 18 MARCH 2022

HDP's Feleknas Uca & Hişyar Özsoy, co-spokespersons of HDP for Foreign Affairs, issued a statement to inform the international community about the worsening situation for ill prisoners in Turkey.

The statement said that “according to the statement of the Human Rights Association (İHD) Prisons Commission, dated December 14, 2021, at least 59 ill prisoners have lost their lives since early 2020, including seven who died shortly after deferment of the execution of their sentences. And according to the İHD's statement of November 19, 2021, there are at least 1569 ill prisoners, 591 of whom are seriously ill. The number of ill prisoners has multiplied by six in ten years. Sadly, the number of prisoners who have lost their lives in Turkey's prisons has increased by nine in just the past three months.”

The statement then listed the deaths that occurred in the past three months as follows:

“On 21 January 2022, Ramazan Turan, a 70-year-old ill prisoner, died in the single quarantine cell where he had been kept for 22 days in Van High-Security Prison. It is claimed that Ramazan Turan died of a heart attack. His autopsy was conducted without the presence of his family lawyers.

On 31 January 2022, Mehmet Hanefi Bilgin (58), who had been behind bars for 30 years, lost his life in Bolu Type F Prison. The prison administration called his family and informed them that Bilgin had had a heart attack. He had had a previous heart attack 3 years ago. Bilgin was due to be released on June 27.

On 2 February 2022, ill prisoner Turgay Deniz, who had severe tuberculosis, died shortly after his release. Deniz had been using a respiratory assist device for twelve years as his left lung was “dysfunctional” and he also had lesions on his right lung. Despite his severe ill health, he was kept in prison. He underwent surgery, but his health continued to worsen. Only then was Deniz released from prison for treatment.

On 10 March 2022, Bedri Çakmak, who had been released in 2021 after the intervention of human rights organizations, lost his life. Çakmak got stomach cancer when he was detained in Diyarbakır D Type Closed Prison, but was not released until his cancer was in its final stages when it was too late for him.

In addition to these prisoners who lost their lives this year, five ill prisoners lost their lives in December 2021. These prisoners are as follows:

On December 9, 2021, Garibe Gezer, who was held in Kocaeli No. 1 Type F High-Security Closed Prison, was found dead in the padded cell where she had been isolated. The prison administration alleged that she had committed suicide. Before conducting an investigation, the prosecutor's office imposed a confidentiality order on the file.

On December 15, 2021, 65-year-old Abdülrezzak Şuyur, who was held in the İzmir Aliğa Şakran Type T Prison, lost his life in his cell because he had not been released despite his advanced cancer.

On December 15, 2021, Halil Güneş, who was on the İHD's severely ill prisoners list, lost his life in his cell in the Diyarbakır No. 2 Prison.

On December 17, 2021, İlyas Demir, who was serving a life sentence in Bolu Prison, was found dead in his cell. Demir had been suffering from mental health conditions.

On December 19, 2021, Vedat Erkmén, who was held in the Tekirdağ No. 2 Type F High-Security Closed Prison, died suspiciously in his cell. The administration informed his family that he had committed suicide.”

The HDP said that “in our statement of 7 January 2022, we drew the attention of the international community to the worsening health condition of jailed HDP politician and former deputy, Ms Aysel Tuğluk, who is suffering from dementia, which has become severe over the course of her imprisonment. On 21 December, Tuğluk's attorneys reapplied to the Forensic Medicine Institute (ATK), for her release. However, the Institute has prepared a report that states that “no medical finding or document has been obtained to suggest that she had a mental defect of a nature or to the extent that it would affect her criminal liability in the period falling within the time frame of the crime...” Accordingly, the forensic medical report has concluded that ill prisoner Aysel Tuğluk “has full criminal liability”. This last report again demon-

strates that the Forensic Medicine Institute is highly politically motivated and its reports are not prepared from an objective and scientific point of view.

We once again call on the international community - and first and foremost the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and other relevant organs of the Council of Europe, human rights commissioners of the Council of Europe and the United Nations, human and women's rights organizations - to take immediate action for all ill prisoners and against this inhumane situation in Turkish prisons, before it is too late."



Guards at Bakırköy Women's Closed Prison threaten prisoners with death

ISTANBUL | 19 MARCH 2022

Esma Başkale, who is being held in Bakırköy Women's Closed Prison, called her family on Friday and said that their cells were raided by the guards and they were threatened with death. Esma's sister, Melek Başkale, said that she called the family yesterday, just like every Friday, and told them that the guards search the wards.

Esma Başkale told her family that more than 15 guards raided the ward, telling prisoners 'We will not give you peace. We will raid the ward every day, not once a week.'

The guards threatened the prisoners with death. Esma said that the search turned into a proper operation and prisoners reacted to it. The guards were intervening physically.

Baskale said that this operation was carried out deliberately, a few days before Newroz, and added: "The prisoners said that they absolutely did not accept this oppressive approach. My sister said that an investigation is launched against the prisoners for the smallest thing and they are given disciplinary punishments. Although they informed the first and second prison directors about the situation they could not get an answer."

Melek Başkale called for public awareness.



Justice Vigil by prisoners' relatives in Van reaches day 105

VAN | 20 MARCH 2022

A delegation from Ankara visited the Justice Vigil carried out by the prisoners' families in Van which has entered its 95th day.

The Justice Vigil was launched by the families of prisoners at the premises of the Van Bar Association. On Saturday, a delegation from Ankara visited the families. Public Workers Union (KESK) co-chair Mehmet Bozgeyik, Office Workers Union (BES) secretary Aziz Özkan, KESK Van Branches Platform, Van-Hakkari Chamber of Physicians (TTB) President Hüseyin Yaviç Democratic Workers Union (DİSK) Van Regional Representative Ömer Tekin were part of the delegation.

'We do not accept the violation of the right to health'

Speaking on behalf of the delegation, Van-Hakkari TTB Chamber President Dr. Hüseyin Yavic said: "I salute the vigil that the mothers have started to ensure justice. We are constantly following the violations related to ill prisoners. The right to health is one of the most basic human rights. We do not accept the violation of this right."

'Deaths in prison are a shame for Turkey'

Emphasizing that the prisoners' right to health is the responsibility of the state, Hüseyin Yavic said: "The state is obliged to fulfil its responsibility. Unfortunately, the lives of nearly two thousand seriously ill prisoners are in danger today in Turkey. Therefore, action should be taken to prevent deaths in prisons. Deaths in prison are a shame for Turkey."

Doctor Yavic told the mothers that their action "is very meaningful important. This action is not only an action by the families of the prisoners. It should be joined by all civil society organisations."

— ★ —

HALABJA MASSACRE

16 March 1988: Remembering the Halabja massacre

16 MARCH 2022

The Baath regime in Iraq under Saddam Hussein left a black mark with a chemical gas attack on civilians in Halabja 34 years ago.

The attack caused over 5 thousand people to die, thousands were disabled and thousands others were forced to migrate.

The bombing was calculated to kill as many as possible. The first barrage shattered protective glass in windows throughout the city, making sure the gas reached its targets.

A cocktail of toxic chemicals was chosen for maximum impact. One gas had a strong, sweet aroma, like apple blossoms, said survivors, intended to make people inhale deeply to find out what was causing the smell. Another chemical was used as a paralyzing agent, causing people to collapse to the ground.

A third and lethal gas was used because it's heavier than air. Anyone who fell, or crouched low for safety, or took shelter in a basement. They were dead within minutes.

Men, women, and children died indiscriminately as toxic gas seeped into their homes, through broken windows, filling the spaces where they'd taken shelter.

Up to 5,000 people perished that day. Thousands more were injured, most of them civilians.

An old man, a survivor of that day, Abdurrahman Reşit Emin, told ANF that he lost his mother and two siblings in the massacre which he describes as "moments of a grimness that would not end". Emin said that the air was covered with the smell of apples: "We were dumbfounded. The sky in Halabja was shaken with sounds of warplanes, of which there were around 10-15, as I might not remember the exact number. Everything happened so fast. Thousands of people drew their last breath in ten minutes. Dead bodies were lying everywhere one looked. The rest left the city and took the migratory route. Those left to poverty and sickness were as many as the dead. Everyone became miserable. Some lost their minds, some went blind."

Kurdistan Alliance remembers Halabja: Chemicals weapons are still used in Kurdistan

AMED | 16 MARCH 2022

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK), the Free Women's Movement (TJA), the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the People's Democratic Party (HDP) and parties within the Kurdistan Alliance Working Group released a statement in Amed on Wednesday on the anniversary of the Halabja Massacre in 1998. Kurdistan Communist Party (KKP) Chair Sinan Çiftyürek read out the joint statement in Kurdish, while DBP Co-Chair Saliha Aydeniz read out the Turkish version.

Before reading out the statement, Aydeniz criticised today's detention of scores of women, including politicians and union representatives in Amed.

Defining the Halabja massacre as the massacre of the Kurdish people's future, a disaster and a tragedy in the history of humanity, Aydeniz said, "Today is the day to commemorate the genocide carried out by Saddam Hussein and the Baath regime in Kurdish cities, especially Halabja, as part of Operation Anfal in South Kurdistan."

'Crackdown and violence cannot prevent the struggle for freedom'

Aydeniz pointed out that the struggle for freedom cannot be prevented through crackdown and violence. “ISIS, which carried out a massacre against the Yazidis, also experienced this reality and shared the fate of Saddam and the Baath regime. However, this mentality persists today with the invasion attacks on Rojava and South Kurdistan and the use of chemical weapons in the mountains of Kurdistan. The most important reason for these attacks and massacres that took place over the years is the dividedness among the Kurds. The Kurdish people have achieved very important gains through an outstanding struggle and resistance against these attacks. It is thus imperative to build a national unity to protect these gains,” Aydeniz continued.

'Everyone should work for national unity'

“Our main focus should be the national interests of the Kurds. Of course, there are naturally ideological differences among us, yet these differences should represent the diversity of Kurdistan but not be an obstacle to unity. A hegemonic war is taking place before our eyes today. As always, the victims of this war are the people. We hope that a lasting and honourable peace will prevail all over the world. We condemn the Halabja massacre once again and remember the Halabja Massacre martyrs with respect,” Aydeniz concluded.



'The Turkish state maintains the genocide in Halabja’

Commemorating the victims of Halabja massacre, parties and organisations stressed that the Kurdish people kept on fighting despite the genocides. It was stated that the Turkish government is still carrying out genocides.

TURKEY | 16 MARCH 2022

On the anniversary of the Halabja and Beyazıt massacres, parties and institutions in Turkey and North Kurdistan issued statements.

The Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB) stated that “On the 34th anniversary of the Halabja Massacre, which claimed the lives of thousands of people, including women and children, and left tens of thousands injured and ill, and went down as a black mark in human history, we commemorate the victims with respect and mercy. We will continue to defend the rule of law against all human rights violations and the right to live in accordance with human dignity.”

KNK: The Turkish state maintains the genocide

The Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) Executive Council recalled that on March 16, 1988, Saddam's dictator and fascist regime brutally murdered 5 thousand Kurds with chemical weapons, and stated the following:

“With the events that occurred this month, March is indeed a month full of sorrow, struggle, and uprisings for Kurdistan. On March 16, 1988, in Halabja, South Kurdistan, one of the most horrible days of this genocide occurred. In the city of Halabja, the dictator and fascist Saddam dictatorship used chemical weapons to kill almost 5,000 people, including children, women, and the elderly. This horrible massacre is still in the minds and souls of the Kurdish people, and it will not be forgotten. This month, colonial, fascist, and dictatorial states carried out several atrocities and genocides similar to those in Halabja in all of Kurdistan.

Such massacres are not limited to Saddam Hussein's fascist regime. In its century-long history, the Turkish state has perpetrated several atrocities and genocides using chemical weapons, and it continues to employ chemical weapons indiscriminately against the Kurdish people. In the past two years, the Turkish state has used and continues to deploy chemical weapons on dozens of occasions against freedom fighters and civilians in South Kurdistan.

As KNK, we want the United Nations, European Union, and International Court of Justice to recognize the Halabja atrocity as genocide and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Kurdish people will never forget the massacre in Halabja. The massacre in Halabja will live on in the minds of Kurds for the rest of their lives. May the souls of Halabja's martyrs rest in peace.”

Salih: Determination has increased

Iraqi President Barham Salih said that, “The Halabja Massacre, which embodies the pain of the Kurdish people and all Iraqis, is a crime against humanity targeting everybody living in this noble land.”

Barham Salih also gave the following message, “This atrocity, perpetrated through injustice and tyranny, has inspired a determination to fight for the right to live a free and dignified life.”

SYKP: They could not prevent the Kurdish people's resistance

The Central Executive Committee of the Socialist Re-Foundation Party (SYKP) said, “The 16th of March marks the anniversary of two massacres commemorated in our geography. On March 16, 2007, seven students were killed by a bomb-armed attack at the university gate in Beyazit Square, and thousands of Kurds were killed by chemical weapons in Halabja. Both massacres were carried out in order to put an end to the struggle and resistance of the oppressed people, workers, and peoples in our region.”

The statement emphasized that, “Saddam Hussein's genocidal attack, carried out with the assistance of imperialists, could not reverse the Kurdish people's battle for independence and equality. We remember those who died in the Beyazit and Halabja massacres with reverence.”

Today it is ISIS and the Turkish state who are attacking

On the 34th anniversary of the Halabja Massacre, the Human Rights Association (IHD) Headquarters and Istanbul Branch issued a written statement.

The ISIS attacks were highlighted in the statement, which emphasized that attempts to harm and destroy the Kurdish people continue.

“According to international organizations' reports, tens of thousands of civilians were killed and tens of thousands of civilians were displaced during Turkey's military operation against Syria's Afrin region, which began in January 2018 alongside paramilitary groups on the grounds of border security and ended in March 2018. It demonstrates how severe and grave the situation is. For the same reason, tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced as a result of Turkey's military onslaught against Northern Syria, which began on October 9, 2019.

The ‘Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic’ report dated 28 January 2020, prepared by independent United Nations specialists, thoroughly explored this matter, as well as reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

The statement recalled IHD’s decision to declare March 16 as “Kurdish Genocide Day” and called for “consistent policies from the UN and the Council of Europe to put an end to armed conflict and war”.

ESP: The Genociders will lose

The Kurdistan Organization of the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) made the following remarks:

“Halabja is an edict to our people who refuse to kneel in order to preserve their national identity. The Halabja Massacre is one of the most horrific chemical-weapons attacks on humans in human history. There is so much to tell about Halabja, such as the words of a child who is running through the bombs and saying 'Dayê bêhna sêva tê (Mom, I smell apples)'. This, however, was the smell of chemical gases.”

ESP said that, “Despite the passage of decades, colonialist regional powers' murderous practices against our people continue. Our mountains are bombarded, gallows trees are set up, our territories are trampled by colonial fascist forces, and the persecution in prisons does not end. Colonist schemes were hatched yesterday in Saddam's golden mansions and are planned today in Erdogan's opulent palaces. The perpetrators of genocides and massacres will be defeated, and our people will win.”

KCK: All those responsible for massacres like Halabja will be held accountable!

Condemning the Halabja Massacre, the KCK said: “The best attitude to protect Halabja today is to oppose the Turkish state's use of chemical weapons.”

BEHDINAN | 17 MARCH 2022

The KCK Executive Council Co-Presidency, issued a statement to remember the victims of the massacre carried out by the Iraqi Baath regime in Halabja.

The statement reads as follows:

“As the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, we condemn the massacre perpetrated with chemical weapons by the Iraqi Baath regime in Halabja on March 16, 1988. We also commemorate all the people who lost their lives during this massacre. The Kurdish people will never forget the Halabja massacre. They will definitely bring those responsible for it to justice.

The Halabja massacre is one of the most ruthless and severe massacres ever perpetrated against humanity. It took place as part of the genocidal attacks on the Kurdish people. The attack on the existence of the Kurdish people began with the division of Kurdistan by the colonial powers. With the aim of putting an end to the existence of the Kurds, the colonial powers committed numerous massacres. The Halabja massacre also served this goal. By using chemical weapons, the Iraqi Baath regime murdered thousands of Kurds in Halabja. Not a single Kurd will ever forget this cowardly and brutal massacre.

The Halabja massacre took place before the eyes of the entire world. But no one raised their voice against it. If the international community had taken a stand against this massacre and had openly rejected it, it would not have been possible for the Iraqi Baath regime to commit such a crime. Knowing that the world would remain silent, Saddam Hussein dared to commit this massacre. He had previously obtained his chemical weapons from the forces of capitalist modernity. By providing extensive supplies of weapons, the forces of capitalist modernity used Saddam Hussein according to their own interests and made him wage war for them.

Chemical weapons were also provided to the Iraqi Baath regime by the forces of capitalist modernity with this aim. Thus, the Saddam government was able to carry out a huge massacre against the Kurds in Halabja with these weapons. The forces of capitalist modernity are accordingly complicit in the Halabja massacre. For they supplied chemical weapons to the Iraqi Baath regime and remained silent when they were used by the regime in Halabja. Consequently, the forces of capitalist modernity are the main perpetrators of the Halabja massacre. They were also the ones who divided Kurdistan into four parts in order to promote their own interests. These forces are not only the main responsible for the Halabja massacre, but for all massacres and crimes committed against the Kurdish people.

As a consequence of this attitude of the forces of capitalist modernity, the occupying and colonial states were able to carry out countless military operations, massacres and other measures against the Kurdish

people. An endless number of military operation and massacre have been committed against the Kurds by the colonial forces. At the same time, not a single state in this world has taken a clear position against all this. This is exactly the attitude that the forces of capitalist modernity continue to display today. They provide the Turkish state with extensive military support in the form of the most modern technology and weapons while knowing perfectly well that the Turkish state is using these weapons against the Kurdish people. As a result, they continue to share responsibility for the massacres and the genocide against the Kurdish people.

Among the weapons provided to the Turkish state are chemical weapons. The fascist AKP-MHP government is using these chemical weapons against our people and our freedom forces. In countless places, such as the South Kurdish areas of Werxelê, Zendura, Mam Reşo and Tepê Sor, the Turkish state has used chemical weapons against the guerrilla forces there. However, just like at the time of the Halepçe massacre, the forces of capitalist modernity remain silent about the use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish people today. Yet the possession and use of these weapons are clearly prohibited. But when it comes to the Kurdish people, none of these rules are applied.

The most appropriate stance against the Halabja massacre today is to take a stand against the use of chemical weapons by the Turkish state. The Kurdish people will definitely hold all those accountable who are responsible for Halabja and the many other massacres. This historic reckoning continues. The Freedom Movement of Kurdistan, through the success of its struggle for freedom, will bring all the responsible murderers to justice.

As the Freedom Movement of Kurdistan, we would also like to take this opportunity to condemn the attack on socialist and revolutionary youth on March 16, 1978, in which seven revolutionaries were murdered in Istanbul-Beyazıt. The Turkish state will definitely be held accountable for its attacks and massacres against the peoples, socialists and all democratic-revolutionary circles. This will be achieved by strengthening the unity of the peoples and their common struggle and overthrowing AKP-MHP fascism on this basis.

As the Freedom Movement of Kurdistan, we are firmly convinced that all anti-fascist forces will carry out a historic reckoning on those responsible for all these massacres by strengthening their unity.



NEWROZ 2022

PKK Central Committee: Newroz is our festival of unity, resistance and freedom

BEHDINAN | 14 MARCH 2022

The PKK Central Committee issued a statement on the occasion of the Newroz celebration.

The statement said: “As the Kurdistan Freedom Movement and the Kurdish people, we are experiencing a new Newroz celebration. Newroz is our festival of unity, resistance and freedom. It is one of the most ancient freedom holidays in human history. With the breakthroughs of the Leader and the PKK, Newroz celebrations have become much more beautiful, meaningful and in accordance with its essence. Just as nature opens itself to flowering in the spring, we also renew and restructure ourselves at every Newroz; we have been filled with the spirit and consciousness of unity, resistance, and freedom.

We, as a people, a movement, our friends we are experiencing the Newroz of 2022 with such an intensity of emotion and thought. We welcome the new Newroz year on this basis. There are enthusiastic Newroz celebrations in four parts of Kurdistan and all over the world. Wherever there is a patriotic Kurd, Newroz is always celebrated. The Newroz year is being welcomed with enthusiasm and determination. We believe that the feeling of celebration will continue throughout the year and that our struggle for freedom and democracy will be continuously improved by making each day as a Newroz-new day.

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From this point of view, we congratulate the Newroz to Leader Apo, all our party comrades, our patriotic people, and our revolutionary-democratic friends, and wish them great success in the new Newroz year.

We salute the great freedom struggle aiming for the physical freedom of Leader Apo that was initiated by the leadership of the Historical İmralı Resistance and continues with heroic resistance in the mountains, at the cities and in the dungeons. We commemorate all our heroic martyrs with respect, love and gratitude, in particular relation to our great Newroz martyrs Mazlum Doğan and Zekiye Alkan. We celebrate the National Heroes Week of our people and once again commemorate all our heroic martyrs, national heroes Mazlum Doğan and Mahsum Korkmaz . We call upon our people and friends to celebrate each day of this year as a Newroz, with full resistance!”

The statement continued: “As it is known, Newroz-2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the Leadership Leap and the starting process of foundation of the PKK. Thus, this Newroz year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Apoist Leadership March and the PKK. The Apoist Leadership Leap took place in Newroz 1973. The Apoist Group, which formed the basis of the PKK, was established at a meeting held in Ankara's Çubuk Dam area during Newroz 1973. Thus, the resistance and enlightening truth of the Apoist Freedom Movement emerged against the oppression and darkness of the fascist-military coup of March 12, 1971.

Now this Apoist truth march is turning its fiftieth year, it has become clear that Leader Apo is a Newroz leadership. The PKK was born and developed as a Newroz party. By the pioneering of Leader Apo and the PKK, the Kurdish people have become a Newroz people with a freedom struggle that has been waged for the past 49 years. This is the first time in the history of Kurdistan that a Freedom Leadership and party movement has managed to continue without interruption like this for fifty years and accumulated historical successes.

On this basis, we salute the turn of the fiftieth year of the Apoist Movement Leap and the birth of the Freedom Movement. We congratulate the Kurdish people, the women, and the youth for they succeeded in creating a Leader and Party that has struggled relentlessly under unbelievably difficult conditions for fifty years. We commemorate the heroic martyrs of this holy freedom march with respect, dignity and gratitude and honor in the personalities of comrades Haki Karer, Mazlum Dogan, Hayri Durmuş, Kemal Pir, Sakine Cansız, Mehmet Karasungur, Agît, Beritan and Zilan. We give our promise to them once again that we shall accomplish their aims and honor their memories.”

The statement added: “Undoubtedly, the one who worked hardest for this sacred freedom march, that has been continuing for half a century, is Leader Apo. Leader Apo both launched this great struggle and held the heaviest burden and accomplished the most difficult tasks. He is the one who has liberated us as militants, party and people from the backward genocidal system, and re-created us in line with a free life. He has both made this path of freedom sacred and has always remained enlightened, paving the way for victory. Therefore, with our deep heart we can't show our respect, love and appreciation enough to him, for these great works and dedication. The truthful and fulfilling practioner is the one who understands the truth of the Leader Apo deeply and successfully. We know this fact, and we mention that we are going to act accordingly at any moment of the 50th struggle year.

Our heroic martyrs gave the greatest support to the Leadership during this half-a century-old holy freedom march. They were the martyrs who made the struggle irreversible and became the guarantors of victory. Alongside Leader Apo, who truly educated, organized, united, and led us were our heroic martyrs. The martyrs brought into existence our endurance and determination for success. Without them we would not be able to do anything, not even take a single step. As the movement and the people, we came into ex-

istence in the footsteps of martyrs, and we have reached this stage thanks to them. Therefore, it is essential for us to understand and successfully implement the truth of martyrs alongside with truth of Leadership. We always commemorate our heroic martyrs with respect and gratitude, and we will keep on always remember them. Our determined and successful march in the fiftieth year will also be practiced on this fundamental grounding.”

The PKK Central Committee added: “Undoubtedly, our leading resistance has been our heroic guerrilla forces who lived and fought along the frontlines of sacrifice. Acting on guerrilla courage and self-sacrifice practices, Kurdish women and youth, and all patriotic Kurdish people created this heroic march that has been going on for fifty years. All the oppressed peoples, especially Turkish, Palestinian-Arab, Armenian, and Assyrian-Syriac peoples, oppressed segments of society and democratic humanity, provided valuable support and contributions to this holy freedom march. On this occasion, we greet everyone with respect and love who contributed to this holy freedom march.”



The historic Newroz that frustrated the international conspiracy

20 MARCH 2022

For the Kurdistan freedom struggle, each Newroz represents a new resurrection and new serhildans (uprisings in Kurdish), but the 2006 Newroz celebrations were a little different. In 2006, people took to the streets to protest the February 15 conspiracy under the motto “Destroy the İmralı system”. The protests and campaigns became more enthusiastic on March 8 and during the Newroz celebrations. Although the Newroz celebrations were banned in many cities, millions came together and responded positively to the question “Do you accept Abdullah Öcalan as a political will?”

KCK Executive Council Member Xebat Andok wrote an article for ANF to recapture the 2006 Newroz and the attitude of the people.

“After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the hegemonic powers, led by the USA, tried to redesign the Middle East. The hegemonic powers handed Öcalan over to Turkey in an international conspiracy and helped the AKP to come to power. The very dubious Twin Towers attack on September 11, 2001, which was used as a pretext for the invasion of the Middle East, including Afghanistan and Iraq, is one of the important turning points as part of this redesign. This would have repercussions for the Kurdish Freedom Movement and Turkey.

Kurdish leader Öcalan made several efforts, including a strategic change, to frustrate the conspiracy and to find a democratic solution to the Kurdish question. His efforts prevented the physical destruction and elimination of the Kurdish Freedom Movement, which was the first target of the conspiratorial forces, in the first place. Öcalan’s efforts to solve the Kurdish problem through dialogue and democratic negotiation failed when Erdoğan’s party AKP, who dubbed himself as the ‘co-chair’ of the Greater Middle East

Project, came to power alone following the November 3, 2002 elections. The AKP, which is a special war party and government par excellence, carried out policies that aimed to eliminate the Kurdish Freedom Movement and to crackdown the Kurdish people with the unlimited support of the hegemonic powers and the treacherous-collaborative Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The well-known June 1st 2004 Move was launched under these circumstances. With the June 1st Move, war once again became the main issue in Kurdistan and Turkey. The AKP gradually escalated its dirty war against our movement and our people. Therefore, in a National Security Council (MGK) meeting on August 23, 2005, Turkey introduced the dirty war and launched an attack on our movement based on the concept of total war.

Viyan Soran sparked actions

In the meantime, our movement introduced the “Medium-Intensity War Tactic and Style” against the “Total War Concept” in military terms, and the campaign “Leader Öcalan is my political will” in political terms.

The AKP escalated the dirty war following the 23 August MGK resolutions and bombed the Umut Bookstore in Şemdinli. The AKP also cracked down on the society. Since the beginning, the AKP has been a special war party that has been carrying out its policies of genocide in a very systematic way. The most effective resistance against all these attacks took place in February, the month of the international conspiracy. February was both a month of large-scale activities and an ongoing petition campaign. The self-immolation action of Comrade Viyan Soran, a member of the PKK Central Committee on the night of February 2, 2006, prompted all subsequent actions. Comrade Viyan believed that one cannot tolerate the İmralı system which should be removed, and people embraced her action. Therefore, the protest actions against the February 15 conspiracy were carried out quite enthusiastically. In the meantime, the signature campaign “Leader Apo is my political will” had also grown. After the March 8 actions, people welcomed the Newroz.

Newroz of 'Leader Apo is my political will'

Consequently, the celebrations of Newroz, the Kurdish people's festival of resistance and freedom, were more different and magnificent than the previous ones. What distinguished this Newroz from all other Newroz celebrations is that almost one million people in Amed shouted that “Leader Öcalan is my political will”. With a referendum in public, the people approved that Öcalan is the political will of the Kurdish people. Thus, Öcalan, who was targeted by an international conspiracy, was declared by the people as the Kurdish People's Leader before the eyes of the whole world. In this regard, the 2006 Newroz was a historical Newroz that frustrated the international conspiracy.

In the same week, after the bodies of guerrillas who were martyred as a result of a Turkish attack were delivered to Amed, our people launched massive actions in many cities in Bakur (North Kurdistan), especially in Amed, inspired also by the Newroz. For a few days, the people completely controlled the streets in many places, especially in Amed, and did not allow the state officials to intervene. The state remained impotent in Kurdistan. A new situation emerged, which Öcalan defined as a “divorce from the system”, which transcended past actions. In particular, Amed became a city of serhildan.

Newroz of 'Freedom for Öcalan'

While the 2006 Newroz was "Leader Öcalan is my political will" Newroz, the 2022 Newroz will be "Freedom for Öcalan" Newroz. The Kurdish people frustrated the international conspiracy by saying "Leader Öcalan is My Political Will!" on the 2006 Newroz, and they will completely defeat the international conspiracy by saying "Freedom for Öcalan!" on the 2022 Newroz.

Therefore, we urge our people, our friends, all over Kurdistan, especially in Amed, to take to the streets to demand Öcalan's freedom, and we celebrate the Newroz, the resistance and Freedom Day of all our peoples, specifically the Kurdish people."



Newroz, Kawa the Blacksmith and Mazlum Doğan

21 MARCH 2022

The legend of Kawa the Blacksmith is thousands of years old. Kawa is the symbol of Newroz and Mazlum Doğan is the modern Kawa.

A blacksmith called Kawa lived in a city ruled by an evil tyrant, Dehak.

Dehak was ill and a doctor told him the only cure was to eat, twice a day, the fresh brains of two children.

The tyrant carried out daily murders across the city until one day Kawa devised a plan. Working tirelessly at his furnace, he cast enough swords for an uprising.

In the mountains outside the city, the blacksmith gathered all their youths and armed them with weapons. After Kawa's signal -- by lighting a fire -- they attacked the evil king's palace and burnt it down.

Mazlum Doğan, the modern Kawa

On 21 March 1982, the day, Kurds celebrate Newroz by lighting up bonfires. Mazlum Doğan ended his life in order to protest against the brutality of the Turkish government.

With this act, he tried to raise awareness about the inhumane conditions at Diyarbakır Prison and other jails in Turkey during the 1980 Turkish coup d'état.

Mazlum Doğan is considered a modern Kawa. He was the first chief editor of the party' newspaper, Serxwebûn.

Mazlum Doğan was born in 1955 in Karakoçan/Elâziğ Province.

He was a member of the Central Committee of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, PKK. He was a Kurdish Alevi.

After he finished high school in Elazığ in 1974 he enrolled at Hacettepe University in Ankara at the Department of Economics.

In 1976 he left the University and joined the students movement where he came in contact with many leftist students who would soon found the PKK.

In 1979 he planned leaving Turkey towards Syria, but was arrested over accusations of founding and leading a terrorist organisation, taking part in the liberation of a comrade from a state hospital in Diyarbakır and identity document forgery.



Turkey: Police attack crowd after Newroz demonstration

TURKEY | 20 MARCH 2022

In Turkey's majority Kurdish town of Kızıltepe (Qoser), police in armoured vehicles intervened with rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannon against crowds leaving the Newroz (spring festival, highly symbolic for the Kurds) demonstration there on Saturday. Groups of youths responded by throwing stones at the armoured vehicles, Mezopotamya News Agency reported.

Five demonstrators were detained.

Thousands of people attended the Newroz demonstration in the town. They continued to chant slogans as they marched in a loose formation back from the demonstration area to the town centre after the event.

An avenue was blocked for a while by the crowd, who chanted slogans, 'Bijî Serok Apo'* ('Long live Apo') and 'Bê serok jîyan nabe' ('No life without our leader').

Two separate columns of demonstrators were later intercepted by the police at two different spots. The crowd refused to disperse, continuing to march, and were attacked by police in armoured vehicles who used water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas.

While no demonstrator has yet been reported injured, at least five were detained by the police.



Newroz celebrated all across Europe

In the Newroz celebrations, tens of thousands of Kurds in Europe rallied for their rights and freedoms, and for the freedom of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

EUROPE | 21 MARCH 2022

Kurdish people and their friends from all countries took to the streets in dozens of cities throughout Europe for the annual Newroz celebrations, which mark, for the Kurdish people, both the coming of the new year on the spring equinox, and the day of uprising for freedom.

In this year's Newroz, named the "50th Year Newroz", after the Kurdish movement of Abdullah Öcalan adopted Newroz into their political movement in 1973, tens of thousands of Kurds rallied for their rights and freedoms, and for the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) who has been imprisoned under severe solitary confinement since 1999.

In some cities such as Hamburg and Krefeld in Germany, Newroz fires were lit and marches organised at night.

'Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan and for the Kurdish people' was chanted at the gatherings of tens of thousands in Frankfurt, where addresses were made and Kurdish bands and musicians performed for passionate crowds.

Marches were also organised for Newroz in Dortmund, Freiburg, Heilbronn, Kiel in Germany.

A march was organised in Paris starting from the main train station, Gare du Nord. Other cities where the Kurdish people took to the streets for Newroz in France included Rennes, Strasbourg and Marseille.

In London a meeting was organised in Finsbury Park where Jeremy Corbyn, former leader of Labour Party also addressed the crowd calling for freedom for Öcalan and all other political prisoners, because he said: "It is most important that we are able to look for a future for the Kurdish people in all four parts of Kurdistan."

Keir Starmer, the current leader of Labour Party also made a statement on the occasion of Newroz in which he stated that the Kurdish people were facing discrimination and being subjected to oppression and violence because of their identities and wished that Newroz would bring democracy, prosperity and peace to Kurdistan and the Middle East.

Newroz was also celebrated in Athens and Lavrio in Greece, in Vienna, Lauterach and Innsbruck in Austria, in Barcelona in Spain, and in Limassol in Cyprus.

Kurds staying in the refugee camps in Nicosia, Cyprus also celebrated Newroz.

Police try to prevent groups from attending Newroz celebration in Diyarbakır

Tens of thousands in Turkey's Kurdish-majority city of Diyarbakır have managed to overcome attempts by the police to stop people from entering the festival Newroz celebration area despite water cannon and pepper spray

TURKEY | 21 MARCH 2022

'Diyarbakır police department, Diyarbakır governor, stay away from provocation' the voice cried from the stage in Turkey's Kurdish-majority city of Diyarbakır (Amed) on Monday, as tens of thousands of people waited in anticipation for the Newroz celebrations to begin.

They listened to a recording of the Kurdish musician Aynur Doğan playing in the background, and waved their colourful flags.

They chanted in Kurdish, 'Jin, jîyan, azadi' ('Women, life, freedom')

They had managed to enter the celebration area after the police tried to stop them by attacking people with water cannons from armoured vehicles and with tear gas and pepper spray, or to slow them down with long body searches.

As Diyarbakır Newroz celebrations has always been of a particular importance among all Newroz events in Turkey, a large number of journalists from various news outlets are reporting. While the hotels in the city is almost full because of the Newroz celebrations, with a total number of 189 journalists who have been accredited.

Over 100 political figures, writers, intellectuals and academics from at least 15 countries are in Diyarbakır to attend the celebrations.



Turkey: Many detained after Newroz celebration, journalist among them

Istanbul's Governor announced that the police took 83 individuals into custody after the Newroz celebrations, with no explanation as to why they were detained.

ISTANBUL | 21 MARCH 2022

At least 83 demonstrators were detained after the Newroz celebration in Istanbul/Turkey, on Sunday.

It's been announced by Istanbul Governor's Office that there were 83 arrests, although there is no reason given for the arrests in the announcement.

Earlier, a journalist named Hayri Tunç was detained during the day on his way to the celebration area. Tunç tweeted that he was "getting arrested". The reason for his arrest was still not clear on Monday.

Lawless practices by the police during celebrations included banning scarves displaying the picture of Selahattin Demirtaş, the imprisoned former co-chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), on them. A street vendor has been taken into custody for selling Demirtaş scarves, Mezopotamya News Agency reported.

The police reportedly also tried to intervene as some of the demonstrators wrote 'PKK' (abbreviation for the Kurdistan Workers' Party) and 'Öcalan' (imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan) on the side of the stage in the celebration area, but had to withdraw upon reaction from the demonstrators.

The Newroz (New Day), is celebrated by the Kurdish people on the spring equinox both as the arrival of the new year, and as a day of uprising for freedom.



Noam Chomsky sends solidarity message to Newroz celebrations in Turkey

VAN | 20 MARCH 2022

The American thinker and linguist Noam Chomsky delivered a message to the Newroz celebrations in Turkey's majority Kurdish city of Van (Wan), where tens of thousands gathered today under heavy snow to celebrate the arrival of the New Year on the spring equinox, and also to rally for freedom and democracy.

Stating that the Kurds have fought heroically for freedom and justice, and that the Kurdish struggle has always been 'inspiring', Chomsky said:

"They have been subjected to and have succeeded in overcoming terrible oppression and violence. Both their struggle and their success in the face of extreme hardships are inspiring. It is a privilege for me to be able to make even a small contribution to this remarkable struggle."

He continued:

"I recently made an opening speech at the University of Rojava. This was totally unimaginable only a couple of years ago. This should teach us that the human soul is capable not only of imagination, but also of accomplishment. This is a lesson carved in our minds by the Kurdish resistance and success. It will obviously develop further, and it will not be less inspiring in the future. They will accomplish nothing less than shaping history in the future. Newroz Piroz Be!.."

Chomsky also voiced strong protest against the severe isolation imposed upon Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and said:

“Mr. Öcalan is subjected to horrendous isolation. This isolation reflects on the Kurdish people too. It must be broken.”

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mother waiting to retrieve her son's remains for 6 years in Nusaybin

MARDIN | 14 MARCH 2022

Between 16 August 2015 and 14 March 2016 in the Nusaybin district of Mardin, 8 curfews were declared to crush the demands of the people for Self-Government. The 8th of the curfews, in which many civilians were killed, was declared on 14 March 2016, while the city was completely evacuated and witnessed major clashes. At least 70 civilians, 17 of whom were children, were evacuated on 26 May, following the Civil Defense Units' (YPS) statement on May 25, 2016, “We have withdrawn from Nusaybin”.

How many victims exhumed?

Various statements were made about those who lost their lives in the city after the clashes, 69 policemen, soldiers and village guards lost their lives and 528 were injured, according to the records of the prosecutor's office. The YPS, on the other hand, announced that 51 YPS and YPS/Jin members lost their lives in Nusaybin, while it was stated that the bodies found in the prosecutor's office belonged to 58 people. According to the records of the Association of the relatives of those who lost someone at the hands of the state (MEBYADER), 83 bodies were exhumed in the city.

Waiting for a DNA matching

6 years have passed, yet many bodies have not been delivered to their families. After the end of the curfew, DNA samples were taken from the bodies transferred to Mardin, Antep, Urfa and Malatya. The bodies were not delivered to their families on the grounds that DNA did not match.

6 years looking for her son

Leyla Değer has been looking to get the body of her son Abdüselam Değer (Kendal), who lost his life in Nusaybin, for 6 years. She was told that the DNA did not match. She said that she heard the news of her son's death on television. “We could not find his body. We went and asked for the body. They said it wasn't the body of our son. We also gave blood samples 3 times. I've asked many times for the body. I want to give my son a grave. But I couldn't find it. I'm still looking. 6 years have passed.”

They said, 'You have a package'

Stating that she was called by the prosecutor's office and said that she had “a package” to collect, the mother thought they would deliver the remains of her son in a package, like it had happened to the mother of HPG's Agit İpek who was sent the remains by post. “I worried very much. Thinking about İpek's mother. There was a storm, it was raining heavily. I went to the prosecutor's office. They gave me a file. They said that the body had not yet come out. I haven't received any other news since that day.”

A call to all families

Reminding that the bodies of other families are still missing, Değer called on other families and said: “Let all families come together. Let's follow our children's struggle. Let's stand together.”

Killing of Kemal Kurkut by police was ‘within legal framework’, says the appeals court

AMED | 14 MARCH 2022

The trial over the killing of Kemal Kurkut, who was shot to death by police during the 2017 Newroz in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeastern province of Diyarbakır, has once again ended in impunity.

The Diyarbakır Regional Court of Justice, the court of appeals, has said that “no offense can be attributed to the police officer on trial” and concluded that the murder was committed “within legal framework”.

As reported by Mezopotamya Agency (MA), the 1st Penal Chamber of the Diyarbakır Regional Court of Justice has finalized the appeals lodged by the plaintiffs against the ruling of acquittal given for police officer Y.Ş. by the Diyarbakır 7th High Criminal Court.

Discussing whether the killing of Kurkut was “within legal boundaries or not”, the appeals court has concluded that the failure of the local court to base the acquittal on this consideration posed a deficiency on procedural grounds and overturned the related local court ruling.

Referring to the Article 17 of Turkey's Constitution on “right to life”, the appeals court has argued that the acts of death and killing in compulsory situations shall not be considered “violations of right to life”.

Background

Kemal Kurkut was shot dead by the police at the security checkpoint on Evrim Alataş street near Newroz Park in Diyarbakır on March 21, 2017.

In the photos taken at the incident time, Kurkut was seen bare-chested quarreling with police at the checkpoint and starting to run passing through the checkpoint. Some police officers fired in the air, some fired on him.

Dihaber reported that Kemal Kurkut was shot despite a police chief ordering “Don't shoot”.

Diyarbakır Governor's Office declared that Kurkut had a knife in his hand, he was “suspected to be a suicide attacker”, and an investigation was launched into the incident.

Put on trial for killing Kemal Kurkut “with eventual intent”, police officer Y.Ş. has been acquitted by the court. In the hearing of the lawsuit held at the Diyarbakır 7th Heavy Penal Court on November 17, 2021, the court ruled that police officer Y.Ş. should be acquitted and criminal complaints should be filed against 72 police officers to identify the possible suspects.

An appeals court has also overturned a ruling that the Ministry of Interior should pay compensation to the family of Kemal Kurkut.

Born in Adıyaman, Kemal Kurkut was a student at the İnönü University Fine Arts Faculty Department of Music. His funeral was held on March 22 in Battalgazi district of Malatya province.

New investigation opened against Emine Şenyaşar

URFA | 19 MARCH 2022

The Justice Vigil carried out by the Şenyaşar family has reached day 369. The vigil was launched on 9 March 2021 by Emine Şenyaşar, who lost her husband and two sons as a result of the attack carried out by AKP Deputy Ibrahim Halil Yıldız's bodyguards and relatives, in Suruç, province of Urfa, on 14 June 2018.

The vigil has been carried out since then in front of the Urfa Courthouse by Emine Şenyaşar and her son Ferit, who survived the attack.

The indictment prepared by the Office of the Chief Public Prosecutor in Urfa on the grounds that Emine Şenyaşar's speeches contained “insults” was accepted by the 4th Criminal Court of First Instance. In the indictment, Emine Şenyaşar's words about AKP Urfa MP Ibrahim Halil Yıldız at the Justice Vigil in 2021 were considered as “insults.”

The prosecutor demanded that the woman be punished, arguing that she had committed “the crime of publicly insulting a public official” as it was understood that the public official she was talking about was Ibrahim Halil Yıldız, the AKP Urfa MP. However, in the speech under scrutiny, the name of the deputy was not mentioned.

The first hearing of the case will be held in the coming months.

Many investigations were opened against Emine Şenyaşar

During the 376-day Justice Vigil, 14 investigations were launched against Emine Şenyaşar. Two of the investigations that turned into lawsuits are combined and continue under a “simple procedural trial”. In one case, Emine Şenyaşar was given a judicial fine of 265 days.



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 15th, 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.

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