

# THE İMRALI POST

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

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## Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

### Kenyan artists face arrest for painting Öcalan’s murals in Nairobi

ANF | NAIROBI | 26 MAY 2022

Kenyan artists who paint portraits on the walls of Nairobi in support of Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan’s freedom are under threat of arrest.

Wahenga, an artist collective, began painting murals in Nairobi in support of the Kurdish People’s Leader’s release. When the issue of Abdullah Öcalan’s release was addressed, the Nairobi Municipality threatened the group with arrest, which had painted over 100 murals in various locations of the city.

Making a statement on the subject, the artists stated that they would not bow to threats, stressing that the concepts of democratic confederalism advanced by Abdullah Öcalan were met with great enthusiasm.



## International Peace Delegation to İmralı 2022

Raising International Pressure for the Release of Kurdish Leader Abdullah Öcalan

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE | 9 JUNE 2022

The International Peace Delegation to İmralı 2022 published a comprehensive report about their findings.

The International İmralı Peace Delegation 2022 conducted a research mission to Turkey to assess Öcalan's situation after twenty-three years of incarceration between 13-14 February 2022. The delegation consisted of representatives of lawyer's associations, human rights lawyers, trade unionists, politicians, academics and writers from across Europe.

The press statement that the delegation published immediately after conducting its investigation was already previously published. [Click here to read it.](#)

The delegation stated that "European institutions and the UN have long tolerated the Turkish authorities' violation of its international obligations. We ask for a stronger voice to be immediately raised demanding that Abdullah Öcalan's isolation to be ended and that the human rights of all political prisoners in Turkey be guaranteed." [Read the full report here.](#)



## British union demands freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

ANF | LONDON | 9 JUNE 2022

The Freedom for Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan Campaign, carried out by 16 unions representing millions of organized workers in England, continues to grow.

Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), which has been actively fighting in the trade union movement since 1847, made a call for freedom for Abdullah Öcalan at its annual conference with the participation of 200 delegates.

Addressing hundreds of delegates attending the conference held in Hastings, Sarah Woolley, next President of GFTU, said that Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan continues to be a hope for progressive humanity with his ideas and the freedom movement he developed in the Middle East.



## 775 lawyers against isolation take action to meet with Öcalan

ANF | AMED | 10 JUNE 2022

The Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) held a press conference at a hotel in Amed (Diyarbakır) to address the ongoing ban on lawyers meeting with Kurdish leader Öcalan and prisoners Veysi Aktaş, Hamili Yıldırım and Ömer Hayri Konar who are held in aggravated isolation on İmralı Island Prison in the Sea of Marmara.

ÖHD Co-Chair Bünyamin Şeker, Human Rights Association (IHD) Co-Chair Öztürk Türkdoğan, Federation of Solidarity with Families of Detainees and Convicts (MED TUHAD-FED) Co-Chair Zeki Baran, Diyarbakır Bar Association Head Nahit Eren attended the press conference, as well as numerous lawyers from Amed, Van, Mersin, Urfa, Hakkari, Batman and Mardin.

ÖHD Central Office Executive Ekin Yeter recalled that no lawyer has met with Öcalan since 7 August 2019, and Hamili Yıldırım, Ömer Hayri Konar and Veysi Aktaş since March 2015, when they were transferred to İmralı Prison.

### **‘Contrary to domestic law’**

Yeter noted that no news has been received from İmralı since March 25, 2021, saying, “The suspension of all their fundamental rights by cutting their ties with the outside world for 15 months is a violation of the prohibition of torture. This situation, which is contrary to international conventions and domestic law, raises serious concerns about the detention conditions of the prisoners on İmralı. It is a legal obligation to address these concerns and ensure their right to visitation.”

### **Hundreds of lawyers ask court to meet Öcalan**

Yeter announced that 775 lawyers registered to 29 bar associations, including representatives of institutions and bar association presidents, have applied to the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office to be allowed to pay a visit to İmralı Prison between June 10-17.

### **Şeker: Visitation ban is against international conventions**

Recalling that the ban on lawyers has been in place since July 27, 2011, ÖHD Co-Chair Bünyamin Şeker stated, “Transferred to İmralı prison in 2015, Konar, Aktaş and Yıldırım have not been allowed to meet with their lawyers since. The ban on lawyers’ visits has been in place for years for various reasons. Visitations were blocked for a long time under the pretense of ‘adverse weather conditions’ and ‘broken coaster’. Between 2011 and 2019, lawyers were allowed to meet Öcalan five times after the massive hunger strike protest. The last visit took place on August 7, 2019, and since a phone call in March 2021, there has been no news from him. Although the visitation ban is based on the decisions of the Bursa Execution Judge, it is against international conventions. The ban on lawyers was added to Law No. 5275 after the state of emergency, yet the case in question violates this article. Even though the reason for the ban on lawyers is clearly stated in Article 59, the Bursa Execution Judge maintains the ban.”

### **‘Lack of information causes concerns’**

Şeker pointed out that the ÖHD and many NGOs had stated on various occasions that the ban is unlawful. “We issued a declaration with 768 lawyers to expose this illegal ban and to urge the Ministry of Justice to respond to this process. We have submitted applications to the CPT and CoE. However, we have not obtained any results. Together with IHD and TOHAV, we applied to the CoE. We could not get any results also from our application concerning ‘Aggravated Prison Sentence and the Ban on Lawyers’ Visits.’

“Lack of information concerning İmralı prison has caused concerns. We went to the İSLAND prison and applied for an assessment on March 8, 2022. But there has been no response from the Ministry of Justice.

In April, we made a collective application under the guidance of the ÖHD. And now, we have applied to Imrali Island Prison as 775 lawyers, including our bar heads and representatives of institutions, to meet the detainees. Members of 29 bar associations are included in this initiative. More applications have been made by some institutions in Europe that stand in solidarity with us. However, the Ministry of Justice insists on this illegality. We renew our call: the ban on lawyers should be lifted. Öcalan and the other 3 prisoners should be allowed to meet with their lawyers,” Şeker said.

### **Turkdogan: We do not accept isolation**

IHD Co-Chair Öztürk Türkdoğan stated that they had demanded the closure of the Imralı prison since the day their association was founded. “The ban on Öcalan and 3 other detainees meeting with their families, lawyers, and their legal guardians goes against execution laws and regulations, international conventions and the 'Mandela Rules'. We endorse the application made by 775 lawyers to meet the detainees. As an institution, we believe that isolation is an unacceptable practice. First, we want lawyers, families and the legal guardian to meet Öcalan. Öcalan’s lawyers say: 'How is it possible that we are banned from meeting our client whom we could not meet anyway?' Such arbitrary prohibitions should be brought to an end. I hope the Bursa Execution Judge will accept this application and the government will also take a step. We know that these are all related to the Kurdish question. We state that putting an end to this kind of isolation will be a step towards the reintroduction of the Peace Process.”



## Prisons in Turkey

### Signs of torture on body of prisoner Sıddık Uğur

ANF | BATMAN | 27 MAY 2022

Sıddık Uğur suspiciously died on 25 May in Batman Beşiri T Type Closed Prison. In the photographs taken while performing religious duties after the autopsy procedures, the traces of rope on Uğur’s neck and the marks of beating on his head attracted attention. It was learned that prisoner Uğur was put in a solitary cell a week ago.

Uğur was arrested on 10 December 2016, accused of having taken part in the events during the time of curfews and state terrorism in Şırnak on 14 March 2016. He was released on 17 July 2017, and arrested again on 19 December 2018.

Uğur, who was first put in Şırnak T Type Closed Prison, was injured in the attacks carried out by the guards against the detainees in Şırnak Prison on 23-25 October 2021, after being sentenced to life imprisonment.

Uğur, who was targeted as “the person who started the rebellion” by the prison administration, was deported to Batman Beşiri T Type Closed Prison.

It was reported that Uğur, who made a phone call to his family on 22 May, said that he was put in an isolation cell.



## Turkish soldiers and FSA torture prisoners from Afrin

ANF | HATAY | 27 MAY 2022

The Prison Commission of the Human Rights Association (IHD) Hatay Branch prepared a report on the violations of rights in the Yayladağı T Type Closed Prison in the city. The report was announced to the general public at a meeting held at the IHD Hatay Branch office on Friday.

IHD Hatay Branch’s co-chair Mürsel Tonguç Salmanoğlu stated that the association paid a visit to the prison upon the application of three Afrin prisoners named İ.M., İ.M. and F.K. and prepared a report based on the statements of the three inmates. He reported that İ.M. was detained and tortured by FSA members in Afrin in 2018, and then handed over to Turkey, where he was sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment three times. Salmanoğlu added that İ.M. was subjected to torture in Hatay and was forced to sign the statement taken under torture.

### 'Marks of torture still on our bodies'

Salmanoğlu quoted İ.M.as stating the following:

“A total of 11 people were unjustly detained by FSA members over an incident and accusation that we had nothing to do with. We were subjected to heavy torture. Marks of torture are still on our bodies. Doctors did not give any torture reports and did not examine us. We did not take any action against Turkey. We are not members of an organization. We did not join any organization in our life. It was the members of the FSA who detained us in Syria, then brought us to Turkey and tortured us with soldiers in a Turkish gendarmerie station. For 3 years and 8 months, we have not been able to inform anyone about the injustice done to us. We can't get any news from our family and talk to them. I'm married and I couldn't see my wife during this period of time. We are not allowed to have phone calls or correspondence with our family. We are completely left to our own fate. Please make our voices heard to the whole world. Let human rights defenders hear and spread our voices. Let them meet with us. It is an injustice done to us.”



## Mother of ill prisoner Bülent Mengeş says her son is not receiving treatment

ANF | ISTANBUL | 28 MAY 2022

Hacer Tayfur, mother of Bülent Mengeş, an ill prisoner in Kırklareli E-Type jail, made a press statement about her son's health at the Human Rights Association (IHD) Istanbul Branch. Lawyer Davut Aslan from the IHD Prison Commission attended the meeting.

Bülent Mengeş was arrested in 2015 for a criminal offense. His mother said that her son was subjected to psychological pressure in prison and was not treated.

Tayfur said that she tried to ensure his treatment and medication were given regularly, but added that her attempts were inconclusive. "I don't want my son to die in prison. I want my son to be released and treated."

Prison Commission member Davut Aslan stated that Mengeş's condition was getting worse since he was not treated.



## Political prisoners not released despite having served their sentences

ANF | BAYBURT | 28 MAY 2022

Ten political prisoners in the province of Bayburt in northeastern Anatolia are being denied release despite completing their sentences. The measure is based on a new provision in the Prison Act that blocks the release of prisoners who have served their sentences and do not express "remorse."

There are currently 17 women imprisoned for political reasons in the M Type Bayburt prison. Ten of them have been punished with isolation at least three times for refusing the military roll call practiced in the prison.

The affected prisoners are Delila Roj Erkmen, Sibel Kaya, Neslihan Çetin, Fecriye Benek, Serfiraz Demirer, Gurbet Ceylan, Sevda Arcan, Şehriban Akdere, Ayfer Başlığ and Ela Kamış. Most of them participated in the mass hunger strike against the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan in 2020. Sibel Kaya and Ayfer Başlığ had already been sanctioned with a disciplinary sentence for "dancing and singing in an unintelligible language" during the hunger strike for singing Kurdish songs while walking in the courtyard.



## Semra Özkan: “My father is living his last days”

ANF | Amed | 28 May 2022

Turkish authorities continue to keep Mehmet Emin Özkan behind bars, despite the 85-year-old’s deteriorating health. According to his daughter Semra Özkan, the political prisoner has been hospitalized twice in the past two weeks. “These are my father’s last days,” Semra Özkan told the Yeni Yaşam newspaper.

Özkan was sentenced to life in prison for the 1993 assassination of Turkish General Bahtiyar Aydın and an arson attack in the Lice district of Amed (tr. Diyarbakır) based on the testimony of two informants. Evidence later emerged pointing to Turkish soldiers as the arsonists and to the Turkish counterterrorism organization JİTEM as the assassins, but Özkan’s name was never cleared. The informants also later recanted their original testimony.

During his 26-year stay in Amed prison, Özkan suffered five heart attacks, was diagnosed with hypertension, goitre, osteoporosis, hearing and vision loss, and memory loss. He also contracted COVID-19 last year. Özkan’s son, Ahmet Özkan, who is serving time in the same prison, is his primary caregiver.

Semra Özkan told Yeni Yaşam that her father was certified by Diyarbakır University Hospital seven years ago as unable to meet his health needs behind bars. All efforts by the family to obtain a reprieve from imprisonment were unsuccessful. The Istanbul Institute of Forensic Medicine found him to be 87 percent disabled—but at the same time certified that he was fit to be imprisoned. According to his daughter, Özkan could no longer recognize or communicate with his visitors. Despite his advanced condition, he is handcuffed to his bed during hospital visits, she said.

According to the Human Rights Association (IHD), the health problems of prisoners, especially political prisoners, are increasing in Turkish jails. In 2021, at least 46 prisoners died. As of April 2022, there were still at least 1,517 prisoners behind bars with serious health problems.

### Why was Özkan convicted?

On October 22, 1993, Brigadier General Bahtiyar Aydın was shot dead in Lice, a district in Amed province. Although the PKK denied involvement in his assassination on the grounds that it did not want to provoke retaliatory strikes that could result in civilian casualties, the government accused the Kurdish guerrillas of being responsible for Aydın’s death.

One day after the murder of Bahtiyar Aydın, the Turkish military carried out an act of revenge against the people of Lice. Sixteen people fell victim to a massacre, and another 36 people were injured, some seriously. The military set fire to a total of 402 houses and 285 workplaces, and the number of people displaced is still unclear.

It later emerged that Aydın had been shot dead by his own people. Mehmet Emin Özkan, who had been arrested on a trivial charge in 1996, was sentenced to an aggravated life sentence for the brigadier general’s murder in September of the same year. The charges against him were based largely on the testimony of a key witness. Since January 2015, the retrial of Mehmet Emin Özkan has been underway at the 7th Adana Jury Court.



## Three prisoners on hunger strike in Afyon No. 1 T Type Prison tortured, say families

ANF | SIIRT | 29 MAY 2022

Rızgar Turhan, Cumali Yıldırım and Mehmet Emin went on hunger strike on 25 May to protest the torture practices in Afyon No. 1 T Type Closed Prison. They were tortured and forcibly removed from their wards on 26 May.

Shahriban Turhan, mother of one of the detainees Rızgar Turhan, said that the lawyer called them and informed them about the situation. “The lawyer told us that they had tortured everyone who entered the ward at night. They took Turhan, Cumali Yıldırım and Mehmet Emin away. We have had no news since then. We are very worried.”

Turhan’s mother said that they called the prison administration but the officers did not give them any information. “We have no information about where they have taken our sons and their condition. Their lack of information worries us a lot,” she said.

Turhan called on the public to be sensitive to the torture in prisons.



## Nuriye Gülmen handcuffed to bed after surgery

ANF | ISTANBUL | 1 JUNE 2022

Violations of rights in Turkish prisons continue to increase. Political prisoners are frequently subjected to torture and arbitrary practices. Treatment of ill prisoners has turned into torture.

In a letter describing the violations of rights in Silivri Prison No. 9, political prisoner Ruken Kılıç revealed that academic Nuriye Gülmen was handcuffed to the bed by the gendarmerie after her surgery.

Gülmen was sentenced to 10 years in prison for being a “member of a (terrorist) organization” even though her lawyers demonstrated that the digital materials shown as evidence in her case were fake.

In the letter written before the hearing, Kılıç said that Gülmen was taken to a hospital after she had metrorrhagia caused by police intervention. “Nuriye Gülmen was taken to the hospital urgently and underwent surgery. She was handcuffed to the bed while she was having surgery. Doctors said that she should not stay in her prison ward. However, authorities said that “handcuffs are mandatory” for Gülmen, who

was kept in the hospital. She was handcuffed to the bed by the gendarmerie while she was in a cloth and her torso was half-naked.”

### **Magazines and books are banned**

Kılıç said that the arbitrary restriction of books in prison continues. “Hitler must have turned in his grave. Hostility towards books has risen from the grave again.” Kılıç added that magazines were also restricted. Letters sent to prison were also damaged by the prison administration. A letter from Grup Yorum member Sultan Gökçek was officially damaged and that coloured paper and pencils were not provided to the prisoners.

Kılıç stated that open visits were reduced to 30 minutes. When the prisoners go to open visits, they receive communication penalties for various excuses. Kılıç said that the prison administration demanded communication penalties for some prisoners for not complying with the seating regulations during the open visits in January-February. “We wore our masks and received 3 doses of vaccination yet sitting next to our families was considered a crime. We are in close contact with the guards who go to their homes every day. Some of them had even picked up COVID. We are faced with a practice contrary to the logic of the open visitings and contradictory practices.”

### **Arbitrary disciplinary punishments**

Kılıç pointed out that their visitors were not allowed to visit them because of security investigations. “However, a visitor, Gül Kaya Yıldırım, who is Deniz Özel’s friend, was never detained even once. Although objections to executions are accepted, court decisions are not implemented. Seval Yaprak’s visitor Levent Navruz and visitors of Sultan Gökçek, Kamile Kayır and Selda Özçelik were not allowed to visit for security reasons.

Kılıç revealed that body searches were used as a method of pressure and intimidation against the prisoners, adding that that prisoners’ bodies are searched by hand and a detector, although there was no legal basis.

Kılıç explained that even the inside of their shoes was searched. The prisoners who did not accept this practice contrary to human dignity received disciplinary punishments and their release were cancelled. Kılıç said that they went on a one-month hunger strike in January to support Sibel Balaç and Gökhan Yıldırım who were on a hunger strike, and that investigations were launched against them. She pointed out that disciplinary investigations prevented their release. Lawyer Yaprak Türkmen’s probation was cancelled on the grounds that “she was not conducting good in prison”.

Kılıç wrote that they frequently held sit-ins to protest these rights violations. However, investigations were launched against them and they received disciplinary punishments. Kılıç pointed out that while their pleas should be taken by the second Director (investigator) according to the legal regulations regarding disciplinary investigations, they were asked to give their statements to a civilian officer.

Kılıç revealed that sick prisoners, Yasemin Karadağ and Aysu Baykal were malnourished because they were not given a suitable diet. Kılıç added although the pandemic measures were lifted, the prisoners were still not allowed to socialize.



## Police attack rally for prisoners in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 2 JUNE 2022

For months, relatives of political prisoners have been holding a “justice vigil” in front of Istanbul’s Çağlayan Palace of Justice on Thursdays to demand the release of those who are seriously ill and continue to be imprisoned for lack of remorse despite completing their sentences. The vigil was again attacked by police today, with six detentions.

In order to support the relatives and their demands, a large number of people came to the courthouse, including HDP deputy Musa Piroğlu, HDK spokeswoman Esengül Demir, members of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD), the HDP Youth Council and the socialist party SYKP. When the relatives tried to present their demands, the police intervened referring to an official ban on assemblies. Piroğlu protested against the arbitrary ban and said, “We are here because human rights are being violated in prisons. We are here so that Aysel Tuğluk and Mehmet Özkan do not have to die in prison. No other people should die in prison. The mothers present here don't want their children to leave prison in a coffin.”

Police attacked the crowd and several people were pushed to the ground and taken into custody.



## Military aggression and occupation

### Cemil Bayık: Turkey is carrying out a destructive policy in Syria

ANF | BEHDINAN | 26 MAY 2022

Speaking on Stêrk Tv, KCK Executive Council co-chair Cemil Bayık talked about the pressures against HDP, the war waged by the Turkish state against the Kurdish people, the Iraqi state’s attack on Shengal and Erdogan’s gangs in North-East Syria.

#### Huge Pressure on HDP in Turkey

Bayık said: “In North Kurdistan, people are being imprisoned and murdered. Even corpses are being attacked. Prisoners who have served their prison sentence are not being released but receive new sentences. Everything Kurdish is being banned. The Kurdish language is being banned. Kurdish concerts in Mûş,

Bedlîs and all major cities of Turkey have recently been banned. Thus, the Turkish state clearly says: ‘You are not allowed to sing in Kurdish, play theater in Kurdish, receive education in Kurdish or to make a single step in Kurdish. You have to give up your Kurdish language and identity. You have to become Turkish and work for the Turks. Only then will you be able to live.’”

Bayik added: “Who continues to fight democratically against all these attacks? The HDP. The HDP does neither side with the government, nor with the opposition. Because the policy of the opposition only serves the interests of the government and the Kurdish genocide. The opposition does not pursue a different policy. But the HDP pursues the ‘Policy of the Third Way’. The HDP does not accept the policy of the AKP-MHP. That is why it is being put under such enormous pressure. HDP members are being imprisoned, the attempt to ban the HDP continues, HDP local administrations have been forcefully brought under the control of the AKP-MHP, HDP centers are being shot at and some people are put in front of the HDP center to insult the HDP MPs. A policy of lynching is being pursued against the HDP. Thus, they want to rid the HDP of its opportunities to work as a legal party. Recently, they banned an HDP conference [in Amed/Diyarbakir]. As a response, the HDP simply made its conference outside on the street. This was absolutely the right thing to do. The HDP needs to keep up this attitude. The AKP-MHP government is at the brink of collapse. This is why it is carrying out these brutal attacks against the HDP.”

### **Impact of War in Ukraine on Kurdistan**

Bayik said: “Ukraine has suffered huge damage due to the war with Russia. Russia has also been unable to achieve its goals. Similarly, the forces of capitalist modernity had thought that they would be able to achieve quick results in the war between Ukraine and Russia. But they have been unable to do so. The war is still going on and it will continue. This situation has brought capitalist modernity into a very critical situation. Because of this, they have become more dependent on Turkey. Turkey tries to benefit from this. It wants to continue its relations with Russia and Ukraine, but also—and even more importantly—with NATO. Because Turkey has once again realized that it can achieve its desired results with this kind of policy. NATO wanted to achieve quick results in the war between Russia and Ukraine, but now finds itself in a very bad situation. Turkey both maintains its relations with Russia and continues to be a member of NATO. That is why their relations with Turkey have become even closer. Through Turkey, they want to transport gas and oil from the Middle East to Europe. Turkey has realized this and is now trying to benefit from these forces for its attempt to destroy the PKK.”

Bayik continued: “This is why NATO is closing its eyes to what the Turkish state is doing. Consequently, NATO does not take a stance against Turkey’s use of chemical weapons or against its occupation. NATO acts like Turkey wasn’t doing anything. When Russia started to attack Ukraine, everybody protested against this. But when the Turkish state occupies South Kurdistan [North Iraq] and Rojava, uses chemical weapons, murders people and destroys the nature there, nobody says a word. Because these forces share certain interests with Turkey and want to use Turkey for their goals. Turkey itself considers this as an opportunity. Turkey knows that Russia is in need of relations with it and therefore tries to secure support from Russia. It hopes to thus be able to successfully pursue its genocidal policy against the Kurdish people and the PKK.”

Bayik insisted that “Europe and NATO have now given Turkey and the KDP certain tasks. The KDP and Turkey also want to transport gas and oil from the Middle East through their territories to Europe. Europe only cares about its own interests. They don’t have anything to do with ethics, conscience, human rights,

democracy and freedom. For Europe, everything that counts are its own material interests. In order to receive oil, they close their eyes to everything the Turkish state is doing. And they even support Turkey. Currently, they are spreading propaganda by claiming that the PKK did not allow gas and oil to reach Europe and that they were attacking the PKK in order to get rid of this obstacle. This is how they are now trying to deceive everybody. The PKK has never obstructed the transport of gas and oil. The PKK does not pursue a policy like that. They are just trying to come up with such an excuse in order to cover up their war of annihilation and genocide against the PKK and the Kurdish people. So that nobody protests against this war. With this excuse, they want to both occupy South Kurdistan and achieve their neo-Ottoman goal of reaching the Mîsak-î Mîlî borders. Therefore, their policy is not based on human rights, law, ethics and conscience but only on their own interests. For this policy, they want to sacrifice the Kurds.”

### **Blackmailing of Sweden and Finland by Turkey**

Bayik said: “Sweden and Finland have recently decided to join NATO. According to the rules of NATO, the approval of all NATO states allows new members to join. But if one member says ‘no’, joining NATO is impossible. It is only Turkey that does not accept Sweden’s and Finland’s NATO membership and uses this to blackmail them. It uses the PKK and the Kurds for its blackmailing. Turkey demands Finland and Sweden to stand against the PKK, help them destroy the PKK and support the genocidal policy against the Kurdish people. Turkey says that it will only accept Sweden’s and Finland’s NATO membership, if they agree to all this. Some NATO member states who support the war against the PKK and the Kurdish people have recently said that they ‘will consider the demands of the Turkish state’. Thus, they are basically saying that Turkey’s demands need to be accepted.”

Bayik added: “Some NATO members have said right away that they accept Turkey’s demands. This means that they accept the destruction of the PKK and the Kurdish genocide and thus carry out the demands of the Turkish state. This is very dangerous. I would like to warn them. They should not pursue a hostile policy towards the Kurds and the PKK. They should not support the Turkish state. They need to avoid giving in to the blackmailing of the Turkish state and need to not accept Turkey’s demands. If they do accept these demands, they will suffer great harm. The Kurds are not like they used to be anymore, but understand these games very well. Nobody can do politics on the back of the Kurds anymore thus securing their own interests and sacrificing the Kurds. The Kurds won’t accept this. They have made a clear decision for freedom. They have decided to either life in freedom, or to not live. It is important for everybody to recognize this and not fall for this mistake.”

Bayik continued: “There are democratic circles in Sweden and Finland. The Turkish state wants to crush them as well. This is clearly one of its goals. Because there is the issue of Olof Palme. After Olof Palme was murdered, they put the PKK on the terror list. Later, it became clear that Olof Palme had been killed by certain other forces. The PKK had absolutely nothing to do with this murder. The MIT [Turkish secret service] was involved in this murder. This has become clear. For many years, they have treated the PKK and the Kurds very unfairly. Sweden needs to correct its decision and apologize to the Kurds. Turkey has seen that especially in Europe, many people work for the freedom of Rêber Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] and for the removal of the PKK from the terror list. And Turkey knows that these demands are growing stronger there day by day. In order to stop this, Turkey is now blackmailing these countries.”

## Need for Democratic Solution in Şengal [Sinjar]

Bayik said: “After the start of Turkey’s attacks on Zap, Iraq attacked Şengal. These attacks were clearly connected with the attacks on Zap. The day of the attacks was a very important religious holiday of the Ezidis, the ‘Çarşema Sor’. This shows that Iraq did not carry out this attack out of its own will, but instead did what certain other forces asked it to do. It is absolutely not in the interest of Iraq to carry out such an attack. On the contrary, Iraq itself has actually suffered harm from these attacks. This shows that the USA made Iraq carry out this attack. And who made the USA do this? The KDP and the Turkish state. Since 2016, the USA, Turkey and the KDP have pursued such a policy together. In Cerablus [on August 26, 2016] they started to put this policy into practice. The recent attacks on Şengal are a part of this policy.”

Bayik added: “Recently, there was war in Şengal, but Iraq was not able to achieve any results in this war. It realized that it would only suffer even greater harm if it continued with the war. If Iraq attacks the Ezidis, this will be considered the same as the Islamic State’s [IS] attacks. This harms Iraq more than it benefits it. The Ezidi people don’t ask to separate themselves from Iraq. They don’t call themselves enemies of the country or demand their own state. All they are saying is: ‘We want to live in Iraq based on our own identity, religion and values. Until now, we have suffered many genocides and nobody protected us. Therefore, we want to be able to protect ourselves. Iraq needs to accept this.’ These demands of the Ezidi people are not huge or difficult to accept. Accepting them would only benefit Iraq internationally.”

Bayik continued: “Some people [in Şengal] wanted to protect themselves against this heavy war and tried to leave Şengal. The KDP then used its own people and intelligence service to lead these people from Şengal to areas controlled by the KDP. Thus, they tried to depopulate Şengal and give everybody the impression that only the KDP could stabilize Şengal. The KDP thus tried to occupy Şengal. But Iraq realized this and consequently stopped its attacks. Therefore, Iraq now wants to solve the existing problems not through war but dialogue. This is exactly what the Ezidis have been demanding. I believe that the negotiations are still ongoing. We hope that these talks will lead to positive results. Both the sensitivities of Iraq and the Ezidi people need to be taken into consideration. On this basis, they need to achieve a common ground.”

## Turkey’s Destructive Syria Policy

Bayik said: “Erdogan wanted to make Damascus fall and make the Muslim Brotherhood gain power there. Thus, he wanted to put Syria under to control of Turkey. When he realized that he wouldn’t be able to achieve this, Erdogan opened Turkey’s doors for the people of Syria. Millions of people thus went to Turkey with the help of MIT. Then, [Turkey] said it would send millions of people to Europe. Europe got really afraid by this and accepted Erdogan’s demands because of its own interests. Europe has given billions of Euros [to Turkey] and has deliberately ignored its genocidal policy. All Syrian factories were brought to Turkey. The people from Syria have become a cheap labor force in Turkey. Thus, Turkey has benefited greatly from them economically. Additionally, Turkey has turned the leftovers of Islamist proxy forces like IS into an army and has used it in Libya, Azerbaijan and elsewhere. Today, they send these Islamist proxy forces wherever they need them.”

Bayik added: “Today, Erdogan is telling the Arab states that the Syrian people are suffering in Turkey, that they therefore want to send them to the Arab states and that they need help for this from these states. And the Arab state provide this help. What Turkey actually wants to achieve by this is to settle down its Islamist proxy forces and their families in North and East Syria. Thus, it wants to carry out demographic change. Turkey forces the Kurds to leave their homes and replaces them with Islamist proxy forces. By doing this, Turkey seeks to cut off the connection between North Kurdistan and Rojava.”

Bayik continued: “The Turkish state wants to annex all the areas that it has occupied. Now, it wants to annex Efrîn, Bab, Cerablus, Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî just like it did with [the province] Hatay. In these areas, the Turkish state has established the same system as in Riha [Urfa] and Dîlok [Antep]. In these occupied cities, education is in Turkish, the schools are in Turkish, Turkish flags have been put up and the police and banks there are Turkish. They have made everything there Turkish. Erdogan portrays all this as a humanistic effort. But actually he does all this against humanity and the peoples. He will settle down the Islamist proxy forces there that he has organized and thus force the people in these areas to capitulate. And he will force everybody to leave who refuses to capitulate. And then, he will call for a ‘referendum’. Thus, he will turn these areas into a part of Turkey. This constitutes a huge danger.”



## HPG statement regarding the civilians killed in Bamerne and the fake news in KDP media

ANF | BEHDINAN | 27 MAY 2022

The People’s Defense Forces Press Liaison Center (HPG-BIM) released a written statement regarding the killing of three civilians in a Turkish attack in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

The statement stated, specifically in response to the “false news” about the guerrilla forces, “The fact that some KDP officials and the KDP media immediately tried to put this incident to our guerrilla forces, is a product of their fear of the just reaction of our people.”

The HPG-BIM statement released on Friday is as follows:

“On May 26, three of our compatriots, two of whom were children, were murdered as a result of the Turkish state’s attack on our people from South Kurdistan, who were having a picnic around the Bamernê sub-district of Amadiya. First and foremost, we express our condolences to the families of all three Kurdish martyrs and the Kurdish people, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery. The massacre at Bamerne exposed the disastrous consequences of the KDP’s relations with the invading Turkish state and its wrong policies.

## **KDP's guilt panic**

The fact that some KDP officials and KDP media immediately tried to put the blame on our guerilla forces in guilt panic derives from their fear of our people's just reaction. Our people, on the other hand, did not heed these baseless accusations because they saw and knew the facts for themselves. While the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla has paid a high price to protect our people's honour and defend South Kurdistan, battling selflessly and giving martyrs, the KDP, which tries hard to legitimize the occupiers' killing of the Kurdish people, must abandon this incorrect mentality.

## **Turkey wants to create an inter-Kurdish war**

The Turkish army, which has suffered fatal blows from guerilla forces, wants to prepare the basis for an inter-Kurdish war by provoking various circles within the KDP in order to prevent its historical defeat.

It had already been reported in the news that some shady plans were in the works to justify the KDP's entry into the war on the side of the Turkish state. On May 24, 2022, some KDP-affiliated forces attacked a guerilla position in Sidekan's Goşinê area in an attempt to incite a fighting. This provocation, however, was proved ineffective due to the sensitive approach of our guerilla group. On May 25, the Turkish army launched an air and ground attack on Girê Hakkarî in the Metîna region, moving through KDP-controlled territory.

## **Guerrillas targeted Turkish soldiers on May 26**

On May 26, the Turkish invaders at Girê Şehîd Agir in Girê Ortê in the Metîna region were targeted by our forces and two Turkish soldiers were punished in this action. The claim that our guerilla troops attacked KDP forces is false.

## **KDP must give up this wrong attitude**

When the Turkish army is in trouble and on the edge of defeat, it is apparent what it means that KDP forces act in this way and the KDP press propagates such false news. A Kurdish civil war will benefit only the colonialist, homicidal Turkish state. It is obvious that such a calamity will cause unrest, instability, and widespread devastation throughout Kurdistan. We urge the KDP to abandon these negative attitudes that could harm the people of Kurdistan, particularly South Kurdistan.”

## Turkish attacks killed over a hundred civilians in South Kurdistan since 2015

ANF | SOUTH KURDISTAN | 31 MAY 2022

The invading Turkish state continues its attacks on the residential areas of South Kurdistan (North Iraq). Airstrikes carried out by the Turkish state killed at least 112 people, including children and women, and injured hundreds of others. In a Turkish drone attack on Bamernê on May 26, 3 civilians, 2 of whom were children, lost their lives.

According to a report released by the CPT—Iraqi Kurdistan Bureau, 109 civilians lost their lives in the attacks of the Turkish state in the region between 2015 and 2021.

One of the biggest massacres in 2015, when the attacks started, was carried out in the bombing of the Zergelê village in Qandil by fighter jets. On August 1, 2015, a total of 8 civilians, including 2 women, one of whom was pregnant, lost their lives and 27 others were seriously injured in the air attack on the village of Zergelê. The names of 8 people who were killed are as follows: “Necip Rojhilat, Salih Mihemed Emin, Karox Mihemed Emin, Heybet Mihemed Emin, Nedim Piro, Êyşê Xdir, Abdulkadir and Mihemed Emin.”

At least 30 civilians were killed, and dozens of others were injured in the attacks carried out by the invading Turkish state between 2017 and 2018.

Some of the attacks of the Turkish state on civilian settlements in 2019 and afterwards are listed as follows:

*January 23, 2019:* 4 civilians were killed in an airstrike on the Dêralok town of Amadiya. The local people organized a demonstration on January 25 in Dêralok to protest Turkey’s massacres, despite the blocking of the security forces. The residents of Behdinan marched towards the Sîre Military Base in Şêladizê. The protestors entered the military base and set fire to military vehicles. In the attack of Turkish soldiers there, 2 civilians lost their lives, and 6 civilians were injured. A child was among those killed.

*June 25, 2019:* Turkish fighter jets bombed a civilian vehicle on the move in the Goşin region of Hewler’s Soran district. One of the two brothers in the vehicle died and the other was seriously injured.

*June 28, 2019:* Turkish fighter jets bombed two civilian vehicles in the village of Berd Kuran near Kortek Mountain in South Kurdistan. Abdula family members, father Abdula Ali Mîne (53) and his children Kurdistan Abdula (30) and Heryad Abdula (19) died. Mother Rabi Mihemed and Mihemed Abdula, Taybet Mihemed Abdula, Benaz Abdula and one individual whose name was not learnt were injured.

*June 18, 2020:* Ebas Mexdît was killed in a Turkish airstrike on the Sidekan region.

*June 19, 2020:* Turkish fighter jets bombed residential areas in the Şêladizê rural area of Duhok’s Amadiya district, leaving 5 civilians dead.

*June 24, 2020:* 2 civilians lost their lives following a Turkish bombing in a picnic area in the Sarbajêr district of the city of Sulaymaniyah.

*July 27, 2020:* Civilians named Dilovan Şahin, Omer Keşanî and Ebdullah Ehmed lost their lives following a Turkish bombing in Amadiya countryside.

According to the report released by the CPT Iraqi Kurdistan Office, the attacks carried out by Turkey only in 2021 and the civilians who lost their lives are as follows:

*May 25, 2021:* 20-year-old Bawer Ahmed was injured while watering his field in the Deşişe village as a result of artillery fire by the invading Turkish army. Other farmers in the area were also injured by shrapnel pieces.

*May 26, 2021:* Two brothers, 16-year-old Ali Muhsin and 20-year-old Hasan Muhsin, were injured when the Turkish state bombed the village of Biherê while they were grazing their animals.

*June 1, 2021:* 70-year-old Ramazan Ali was injured by Turkish artillery fire while watering his fields in Hirure.

*July 8, 2021:* A civilian was injured in the village of Hirure when the Turkish army commenced fire on agricultural lands.

*August 13, 2021:* Ibrahim Hassan Mohamad (51) was shot by Turkish soldiers while irrigating his fields in the Deşişe village of Kani Masi. Villagers were forced to migrate due to the Turkish army's operation earlier this year. Mohamad had briefly returned to the village with 12 others to irrigate the fields to support their families.

*August 20, 2021:* Ahmed Şakir (40) and Yousif Amir (26) were killed by Turkish artillery fire in the Batifa district of Zakho. The families of Şakir and Amir, who came to the region as tourists from Mosul, learned about the death of their relatives when the bodies were found 2 days after the incident.

## **Hundreds of villages in jeopardy**

The report of the CPT—Iraqi Kurdistan Bureau also reveals that hundreds of villages are in jeopardy because of the Turkish attacks: “We have reported that 109 civilians have been killed and more than 120 civilians were injured as a result of these attacks since 2015. 648 villages are about to be completely evacuated. There are only 55-60 families living in these villages. If there is even a single family, we do not call that village 'evacuated.' We call it a village under the risk of evacuation. 150 villages have already been completely evacuated.”

Although the CPT report said that the number of civilians killed is 112, 168 civilians have lost their lives in the Behdinan region alone since 2015 as a result of the attacks of the invading Turkish state.

## War crimes covered up

The number of people who lost their lives in the attacks of the invading Turkish state across South Kurdistan is much higher than reported.

Those killed in the Turkish attacks are not declared martyrs by the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the cause of deaths is not officially recorded by the Forensic Medicine Institute. This shows that the Kurdistan Regional Government is covering up the war crimes committed by the Turkish state against the Kurdish people in South Kurdistan.



## Chemical desperation of the Turkish army in Zap

ANF | BEHDINAN | 7 JUNE 2022

The war of existence and freedom waged by Kurdish guerrillas against Turkish occupation and KDP betrayal in the Zap area is about to enter its second month. The Turkish army is getting a new 'Zap slap' in the face. A historic struggle is continuing in the areas of Kurojahro, Şikefta Birîndara, Çiyareş and Ertuş. On the one hand, there are fighters who are defending their positions on hills, not giving free passage to Turkish troops in the battle tunnels. On the other hand, there are semi-mobile fighter teams that have been carrying out non-stop actions under intense Turkish aerial attacks since the first day of this war. Moreover, there are guerrilla units that make the Turkish soldiers regret attacking these hills through their actions with heavy weapons, and the assassination teams that leave the Turkish soldiers in shock and horror. Dozens of guerrillas who devoted themselves to success in this war...

What has caused such a situation to emerge in the first two months of the Zap battle is undoubtedly the guerrillas' claim to victory, their commitment to the leader and freedom, and their tactical mastery and guerrilla warfare focused on victory. In the face of the guerrilla resistance, the Turkish army has only fighter jets that constantly bomb the lands of Kurdistan, and the corpses of its soldiers, whose identities have not yet been revealed, and which have been abandoned under rocks for days. Its psychologically disturbed soldiers get stuck in the deep valleys and cliffs of Zap...

The only weapons that the Turkish army has desperately resorted to are chemical weapons, poisonous gases and large explosives. The Turkish army used chemical gas in almost every battle tunnel, especially in the Avaşîn area, as it received huge blows last year and caused guerrilla casualties. The Turkish army, which does not recognize any war ethics, has again resorted to chemical weapons in the dirty war it is waging this year.

Trying to back up its soldiers who cannot easily approach the battle tunnels as a result of the guerrilla actions this year, the Turkish army is pursuing a war method it has employed against the guerrilla forces previously. The battle tunnels are heavily bombed by fighter jets which drop rockets and barrel bombs containing intense chemical gases. Chemical weapons have been used intensely in Turkish airstrikes, especially

in the Çiyareş, Şikefta Birîndara, Şehîd Şahin, Werxelê and Kurojahro areas. As a result of the measures taken by the guerrilla forces against these chemical gas attacks, many fighters were saved in several places. However, 8 guerrillas were martyred in Çiyareş and 5 others in Kurojahro due to the Turkish chemical attacks.

The Turkish army resorts to NATO weaponry after each defeat and employs a new method each day, especially in the Zap area, in order to get rid of the stalemate it has reached, and to encourage its soldiers to fight. The use of chemical weapons is the last-ditch attempt of an army whose prestige has been lowered on the verge of defeat. Muddling around in this chemical desperation, the Turkish army is running amok to face a historic defeat in Zap.



## Femicide

### 10 women killed in South Kurdistan in May

ANF | SOUTH KURDISTAN | 3 JUNE 2022

Femicides and suspicious deaths of women are increasing in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

According to a report by NuJINHA, most femicide cases in the region are reported as “honour killing.” 10 women and 3 children were killed or suspiciously lost their lives in May as a result of the policies in the region.

The cases of femicide and violence that took place in South Kurdistan in May are as follows:

- On May 2, a man killed his wife and 3 people with a firearm in the Sengawa neighbourhood of Chamchamal town in Sulaymaniyah, and seriously injured his mother-in-law. A complaint had already been made about the perpetrator before the incident.
- A Yazidi woman named E.Q.E was forced to commit suicide on May 5 in the Bêrsîvê Refugee Camp in Zakho.
- On May 5, a man named Nasir Elî Feteş murdered his wife Leyla Salih Mehemed in the Pence Elî neighbourhood of Kirkuk.
- A woman was murdered with a knife on the night of May 5-6 by her husband in the Zergete district of Sulaymaniyah. Relatives of the woman revealed that the man had been arrested before but was released later despite complaints about him. It is reported that the woman was exposed to violence 40 days after the wedding ceremony. The woman reportedly left the house and went to her

father's place when the man constantly demanded money from her. Their divorce case was pending for 7 months.

- On May 9, a man named A.T.M. killed his wife Bihar Zekerya Feteş in the Tecil District of Hewler.
- On May 10, a woman was murdered by her husband in the Serhildan district of Duhok.
- A man named D.A.M. attacked the house of his wife T.İ.M.'s family, where the woman had taken refuge as a result of systematic violence in the town of Chamchamal, Sulaymaniyah. One person died.
- On May 14, a man attacked the house of his wife's family in the Şoreş neighbourhood in Hewler. The man injured the woman whom he had attempted to murder.
- The Pêncewîn police announced on May 17 the dead body of a 14-year-old girl had been found.
- A woman was found dead in Zakho on May 21.
- On May 23, a man murdered his wife in the Nezwawe village in the Berderesh town of Duhok.
- A child was forced to commit suicide in Gewreguska, Hewler on May 23.
- On May 25, a woman named Temine Eziz was found dead in a suspicious way in her house in Hewler.
- The bodies of a woman and a child were found within 8 hours in the Kelar town of Germiyan. It is reported that X.X.E, who allegedly committed suicide and whose dead body was found in the Hey Muzefini neighbourhood, had married 3 months ago. The dead body of a child named C.S.A. was found in the village of Salih Axa in the Quretu region.



## Men kill at least 32 women in May

ANF | ISTANBUL | 4 JUNE 2022

In May 2022, men killed at least 32 women. They had killed 18 in April. Men also killed at least four men who were with the women.

One of the women killed by men was a trans woman. One of the men who killed women was a security guard.

One of the women killed by men was a Syrian citizen and one was an Afghan citizen. Men killed at least five women, violating “protection” or “restraining” orders.

21 women were killed by their husbands, ex-husbands or boyfriends. Two women were killed by relatives.

Men killed 20 women inside the house and 12 women in places outside the house, such as a forest area, a street and a hospital.

Men killed more than half of the women with firearms.

Men killed 20 women with firearms, two women by strangling them, five women by using sharp objects, two women by torturing them, one woman by battering her, and one woman by throwing her off a balcony. In one case, it was not established how a woman was killed.



## Ecocide

### Cutting of trees continue in Cûdî and Besta

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 28 MAY 2022

Cutting of trees continue in Şırnak's Cûdî and Gabar Mountains and the Besta Region.

Deforestation continues in a wide area from Benavya and Nevava in Cûdî, from Kengê Gêrê Sêvê region to Çemê Mezin region, Bîra Pêşû, Rîsor, Şerevan, Qurteka Pêşya, Têkera and Keniya Mîr regions in Besta.

It was stated that the trees on people lands in the Bîra Pêşû region in Besta were also cut down and that the people whose trees were cut down were threatened by the village guards.

On the other hand, the construction of the police station, which was started in the Kanîya Mîr region of Besta, also continues.

It was noted that the cut trees were stored in the villages of Navyan and Mila Kêrî, and from there they were loaded on trucks and taken out of the city to be sold.

While the military attacks launched in Cûdî continue, people are still prohibited from entering and leaving the villages of Avgamasya, Serêdehlê and Şilêrît in the province of Şırnak.



## Turkish army destroys trees for a new military base in Muş

ANF | MÜS | 29 MAY 2022

Since the beginning of spring, intensive forest clearing has been taking place in the northern Kurdish province of Muş. The region affected by the destruction of nature is Şenyayla, which until last year belonged to the Kulp district and thus lay within the provincial borders of Amed (Diyarbakır). In March 2021, head of state Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had the region separated from Kulp by decree. Since then, Şenyayla has been part of the Muş province.

Two months ago, the Turkish army had cut a wide swath through the mountainous region. A military road was built in no time at all. Now the construction of a base with several outposts and a precinct for the gendarmerie has begun. The trees cut for this purpose are collected in the Hişk Valley, where a large number of camouflaged trucks are standing by. The vehicles transport the wood to various provinces, where it is sold for profit.

The so-called village guards are likely to serve as the military's henchmen for the environmental massacre in Muş. As early as 2020, when Şenyayla was still part of Kulp, a paramilitary unit based in the region had cut down around a thousand oak trees on a forested area on the edge of a restricted military area on behalf of the Turkish army. In other provinces as well, especially in Şırnak, the army is using village guards to clear forest stands for the expansion of its military infrastructure in Kurdistan.



## Hakkari and Van victims of environmental destruction

ANF | VAN | 30 MAY 2022

The Northern Kurdish provinces of Hakkari and Van were focal points of the Turkish special war. Due to dam projects, many valleys are flooded for strategic military reasons. At the same time, nature is being exploited colonially by the Turkish state and its profiteers, but also by international corporations.

### German companies involved in mining

Ali Kalçık, chairman of the monument protection association ÇEV-DER in Van, spoke about this situation with ANF.

Kalçık said that companies from over sixty countries, including the United States, Canada, France and Germany, are involved in mining in Hakkari. The land of the rural population is occupied and made available to the companies.

“The villagers are not even allowed to enter the areas where the mines are being built. And this despite the fact that they own the land,” explained Kalçık, adding: “That’s just wrong. Mining destroys the beauty of

nature and the habitat of animals. Above this, the rubble and sewage from the mines is dumped into the Zap River. This poisons the river.”

Kalçık added: “Every year new tenders are held and new areas are made available to these companies. New places are always left to the companies and they are destroyed. This is just terrible. Not only human life, all forms of life are threatened. There is real devastation on Mount Cilo, Sümbül and Meskan. The mountains are perforated, and labyrinths of tunnels are built into which even trucks can drive. The Zap Valley and its waters are being polluted by mines. As ÇEV-DER we showed solidarity with the civil society organizations in Hakkari. We also appeal to the environmental associations in the region as well as throughout Turkey. We want them to stand up against this devastation.”

### Marble quarry in Zilan Gorge

The Zilan Gorge in the northern Kurdish province of Van is also under acute threat. The historical site of the Zilan massacre, with its unique nature, has already been greatly destroyed in recent years by a large number of dams. Now nature is being dealt its death blow by a marble quarry.

Kalçık explained: “We have conducted investigations in the Zilan Gorge. We also monitor the completion of the dam projects. We have complained in relation to this. The proceedings are ongoing. During our investigations we found the destruction of the environment by a marble quarry. In particular, we found that the endemic pearl mullet is threatened with extinction due to the marble quarry. The marble quarry in particular poses a major threat to the future of the life forms endemic to the region. Agricultural engineers and lawyers also took part in the investigations that we carried out there. For the future of life in the region, this marble quarry must be closed immediately.”



## Turkey destroyed three million trees in Behdinan and Duhok

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 5 JUNE 2022

The Kurdistan Green Party made a statement in its Sulaymaniyah Office on the occasion of June 5, World Environment Day.

Speaking here, the party’s spokesperson Dana Necmedin stated that the Turkish state’s attacks have resulted in huge environmental destruction in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

Necmedin stated that Turkey has destroyed nearly three million trees in the Behdinan and Duhok regions, noting that a complaint has been filed with the Iraqi Court and the United Nations about this “brutal and inhuman destruction.”

He added that the party was working on a project to plant one million trees in Sulaymaniyah and surrounding region.

The Kurdistan Green Party called on the local population to provide assistance for the protection of Kurdistan's nature and environment.

In summer, forests in Kurdistan are systematically destroyed. The Turkish government is responsible for this, as it is also responsible for arson and clearing beyond the state borders in southern Kurdistan and Rojava (northern Syria). In northeastern Syria, cultivated fields in particular are deliberately set on fire. In northern Iraq, the Turkish army acts as an occupying force, clearing large areas of forest and marketing them in Turkey last year. In other areas, slash-and-burn operations were carried out to deprive the guerrillas of shelter in the bare areas. Forests also frequently catch fire as a result of air strikes.



## Human Rights Violations

### Dancing university students detained in Dersim

ANF | DERSIM | 27 MAY 2022

In Dersim, five students from Munzur University have been detained as a “security risk”. The action was justified by dances that have been reclassified as “illegal action” by the Turkish police. The group was forcibly removed from campus and taken to the local police headquarters. They face charges of violating the Law of Assembly.

Meanwhile, Munzur University has been besieged by security forces since Friday morning. Police are present with several water cannons and armored vehicles, numerous officers are visibly positioned throughout the campus area and at the entrances. The background to the mobilization is protests by the student body against activities of the Islamist “Youth Foundation of Turkey” (TÜGVA) at the university and in Dersim in general.



### Press organizations say government's “Disinformation Law” will lead to heavy censorship

ANF | TURKEY | 28 MAY 2022

Seven leading journalism organizations in Turkey expressed “concern over a bill on disinformation that we believe could lead to one of the heaviest censorship and self-censorship mechanisms in the history of the Turkish Republic.”

Deputies of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) have submitted a “disinformation bill” to the parliament.

Signed by 66 MPs from the two parties, the “Law Proposal on the Amendment of the Press Law and Some Laws” was submitted to the Speaker’s Office of the parliament on 26 May. The 31-page draft law contains 39 articles.

The statement signed by the Journalists’ Union of Turkey (TGS), International Press Institute’s (IPI) National Committee in Turkey, Association of Journalists, Progressive Journalists Association (PJA), Turkish Press Council, Haber-Sen and İzmir Journalists Association (IGC), said that “the bill was prepared behind closed doors by the ruling AKP and the MHP executives and the opinions of the journalists were not consulted.”

The statement said: “The bill adds a new crime titled “distributing deceptive information publicly” to the criminal code with prison sentences. It also gives the administration new powers to sanction the media with fines, advertising bans, and bandwidth throttling. If the bill becomes law, it will boost the systematic censorship and self-censorship in Turkey, instead of fighting disinformation. We call for its immediate withdrawal because a media law that fails to reflect the views of journalists and journalism organizations cannot solve the problem of disinformation.”

The press associations said that the bill “cites concepts such as disinformation, fake news, baseless information and distorted information without providing legal definitions and also refers to vague notions like security, public order and public peace. These vague definitions and concepts have been used against journalists in trials. Such an approach leaves the laws open to gross abuse by a judicial system that is already suffering from political capture and a loss of independence. We reject this law proposal.”

The press organizations called on all political actors to initiate a dialogue process with journalism organizations to solve the problems such as disinformation and said: “Disinformation is a problem in the whole world. There are many other problems that reduce the quality of journalism in Turkey and harm the public’s right to be informed. We invite all political actors to initiate a comprehensive and transparent dialogue process with journalism organizations to create pluralist laws, establish democratic institutions and improve self-regulation that can solve these problems, following the suspension of the current law proposal.”

The Parliamentary Committee on Justice will start discussing the bill.



## Illegal monitoring of the Kurdish associations in Germany

ANF | BERLIN | 28 MAY 2022

Information on associations having a majority of foreign members is submitted to the Federal Administration Office in Cologne in accordance with a “law on associations” passed in Germany in 1966. “As re-

quired by law,” the names and addresses of the associations' board of directors, as well as their statutes, are sent to the Federal Administration Office.

Until now, this department has received information from around 15 thousand associations. This technique, which involves profiling all organizations with immigrant members, is not employed for associations with a majority of German members.

With a proposal submitted to the Federal Assembly in 2020, the Left Party, one of the 2020 opposition parties, demanded that the law be changed, saying “End the marginalization of immigrants.” However, both the government and opposition parties voted against the Left Party’s motion, with votes from the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, and AfD.

### **The decision regarding Kurds is not found**

Since 1994, the Federal Administration Office has transmitted information about Kurdish associations to the country’s internal intelligence agency, the Constitutional Protection Organization, and the Security Directorate. It has been revealed that information on 209 Kurdish organizations has been exchanged with intelligence and security services over the last three years.

In a statement issued in 2019, Stephan Mayer, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior at the time, noted that Kurdish associations were being monitored due to the PKK ban, and that “this is an obligation.” However, there was no bylaw requiring the automatic exchange and monitoring of information belonging to Kurdish associations with intelligence and security organizations.

### **Is the information shared with MIT?**

Mahmut Özdemir, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, who was asked by Left Party Deputy Gökay Akbulut if they had “the circular from 1994”, said that “We have been unable to find the requested circular.” Following this answer, federal parliamentarian Akbulut declared that security units monitoring and profiling Kurdish associations is unacceptable and should be stopped immediately.

It is also unclear whether information gathered about Kurdish associations and organizations in practically every German city is shared with the Turkish intelligence MIT. While the Scholz government said last April, “Information belonging to foreign associations was not shared with foreign intelligence services,” there are several severe doubts regarding this. Because it had previously been revealed that German security forces shared investigation files on Kurdish and other Turkish socialist movements with the Turkish state through “security cooperation” agreements.

## 21 language organizations and associations protest ban on theater plays and concerts in Kurdish

ANF | TURKEY | 30 MAY 2022

21 language organizations and associations, including the Kurdish Language and Culture Network, the Mesopotamia Cultural Center (MKM) and the Istanbul Kurdish Institute, made a statement regarding the ban on concerts and theatre plays in Kurdish. The joint statement pointed out that the attacks against the Kurdish language have continued for centuries. They pointed out the latest banning of the concerts of Aynur Doğan and Metin Kemal Kahraman and the theater play of Tiyatro Mencil.

The statement said: “We are aware that the reasons put forward for the cancellations are excuses, and that the main issue is the uneasiness caused by the Kurds claiming their own language and culture everywhere.”

### We will respond to the bans

Emphasizing that the Kurdish language will always be defended despite all prohibitions and obstructions, the statement said: “We will respond to these prohibitions and attacks by speaking our language everywhere, singing and performing art in our mother tongue everywhere. These attacks can only increase our determination to protect and develop the Kurdish language. The Kurdish people will not give up their language. We will defend our language in all areas of life against these prohibitions against Kurdish language and culture.”

Among the organizations and associations that signed the statement were: Kurdish Language and Culture Network, Mesopotamia Cultural Center (NÇM-MKM), Mesopotamian Languages and Cultures Research Association (MED-DER), Istanbul Kurdish Institute (Kurdish Studies Association), Diyarbakır Kurdish Institute, ARSİSA Language, Culture and Art Research Center Association, Kurdish Literature Association, ARI-DER Language and Culture Research Association, Birca Belek Association, AVESTA – Language and Culture Research Association, Ferat Language and Culture Research Association (FERAT-DER), East Southeast Associations Platform, Muş Associations Federation, Şirvan Associations Federation, Wan Associations Federation, Iğdır Associations Federation, Batman Associations Federation, Elazığ Karakoçan Associations Federation, Istanbul Patnoslular Platform, Destar Magazine, Ecology Association.



## Police in Batman take 11 women into custody

ANF | BATMAN | 31 MAY 2022

As part of a new political operation in Batman, some houses were raided by the police in the morning.

Batman Municipality Co-Mayor Songül Korkmaz, who was replaced by a trustee, Bekirhan Municipality Co-Mayor Gülistan Sönük, Kozluk Municipality Co-Mayor Nazime Avcı, HDP Batman Provincial Co-Chair Fatma Abla, Provincial Assembly Member Semra Güneş, HDP Central District Co-chair Gurbet Doğan, TJA activists from Gurbet Bozyiğit, Halide Keser, Gulnur Deli, Zeynep Oduncu and Ruken Zeryam Işık were detained. The detainees were taken to the Batman Provincial Security Directorate.



## Police raid HDK Headquarters in Istanbul, take 42 people into custody in various cities

ANF | ISTANBUL | 3 JUNE 2022

Police raided the Headquarters of the Peoples' Democratic Congress (HDK) in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul in the morning hours.

The Turkish police seized various materials during the raid carried out within the scope of the investigation launched by the Tekirdağ Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

Within the scope of the same investigation, many houses in 10 provinces were raided and 42 people were detained.

Among those taken into custody are: HDP Headquarters executive Abdurrahman Öztürk, HDP PM Member Kenan Yıldız, HDP Kırıkkale Provincial Co-chair Yakup Aslan, HDP Bağcılar District Organization executive Ramazan Kırkpınar, HDP Beylikdüzü District Co-chair İrfan Hülakü, HDP Edirne Provincial Co-chair Melahat Çelik, HDP Tekirdağ former Provincial Co-chair Alev Ateş.



## Notorious judge Gürlek appointed as new deputy justice minister

ANF | ISTANBUL | 3 JUNE 2022

Istanbul's notorious criminal judge, Akın Gürlek, has been promoted to the Ministry of Justice by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This is according to a decree published in the Official Gazette on Thursday. With the appointment, Gürlek will assume the post of deputy justice minister with immediate effect. The opposition is angry.

Gürlek is considered a loyal henchman of Erdoğan and is known as the “executioner in robes”. He was the preferred choice for politically highly explosive trials and handed out long prison sentences. In 2018, Gürlek sentenced the Kurdish politician and former chairman of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtaş, to four years and eight months in prison for “propaganda for a terrorist organization.” Filmmaker and former HDP deputy Sırrı Süreyya Önder received a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence in the same trial. The sentence against Istanbul CHP Chairwoman Canan Kaftancıoğlu of nearly ten years in prison on various charges, including “terror propaganda,” fell under Gürlek’s jurisdiction in 2019. Last May, Turkey’s top appeals court agreed to convict her on three charges. She is to be behind bars for four years, 11 months and 20 days. The sentence carries a five-year ban from politics. On Tuesday, Kaftancıoğlu was in Silivri prison and was released the same day under supervision.

Also in 2019, Akın Gürlek sentenced seventeen lawyers from the Association of Progressive Lawyers (ÇHD) to prison terms ranging from two years and 15 days to 18 years and nine months in the absence of the defendants and in camera. Ebru Timtik, one of the convicts in the ÇHD trial, died in August 2020 as a result of a month-long hunger strike for a fair trial. Less than three weeks after her death, the Court of Cassation overturned Timtik’s sentence.

In 2020, Akın Gürlek ensured that the well-known exiled journalist Can Dündar was declared a “fugitive” and his assets seized. That same year, he refused to implement a decision by Turkey’s Constitutional Court on a verdict against CHP politician Enis Berberoğlu. Berberoğlu was imprisoned between June 2017 and September 2018—when he was a member of parliament. He had initially been sentenced to 25 years in prison for betraying secrets, but in a retrial in February 2018 the sentence was reduced to five years and ten months. The politician was accused of leaking secret information to the anti-government newspaper “Cumhuriyet”, which allegedly proved Turkish arms supplies to Islamists in Syria in 2014.

In the parliamentary elections in June 2018, Berberoğlu was re-elected as a deputy for the CHP for five years—from prison. The Constitutional Court ruled unanimously last January that Berberoğlu’s imprisonment violated his right to personal freedom and his right to engage in political activity. The court had already ruled last September that Berberoğlu’s rights had been violated and that the case should be reopened. However, a lower court in Istanbul, with Gürlek presiding, refused to implement it.

In June 2020, Berberoğlu was stripped of his deputy mandate at the same time as Kurdish HDP deputies Leyla Güven and Musa Farisoğulları because of a final verdict. He was subsequently arrested again, but then released and placed under house arrest due to the pandemic. The ruling did not apply to Güven and Farisoğulları.

## Adana Governor's Office bans the play "Tartuffe" in Kurdish, while Mersin's gives green light

ANF | ADANA | 5 JUNE 2022

The play in Kurdish *Tartuffe* by Moliere, which was scheduled at Adana Metropolitan Municipality Theater Hall, was banned by the Adana Governor's Office.

The application made to Adana Governor's Office to stage the theater play was rejected. Adana Governor's Office banned the play, saying it was "not deemed appropriate"

On the other hand, unlike the Adana Governorate, Mersin Governor's Office gave permission for the Kurdish play *Tartuffe* to be performed.

Reacting to the ban decision, the organizer Suat Ekin underlined the opposite decision given by the two governorships. "Normally, there is no need to get permission from the governor's office for events to be held in halls. But the CHP Adana Metropolitan Municipality Culture Directorate insisted that, because the play is in Kurdish, it was better to get permission from the governor's office. The banning decision is an indication of intolerance towards Kurdish language."

*Tartuffe, ou l'Imposteur* first performed in 1664, is a theatrical comedy by Molière. The characters of Tartuffe, Elmire, and Orgon are considered among the greatest classical theatre roles.



## Dicle Fırat Journalists Association says 11 journalists detained in May

ANF | TURKEY | 6 JUNE 2022

The May violation report published by the DFG against journalists said: "Unfortunately, there is a systematic violation of rights in our country against journalists and the media they work for."

The report added: "These violations have now become intolerable torture."

The DFG continued: "We are calling out to the government led by the AKP and MHP; your efforts are in vain, you will not be able to intimidate journalists with these unlawful practices."

Stating that May was another month of violations of rights against journalists, the DFG said: "Six journalists who followed the demonstrations on the occasion of the ninth anniversary of the Gezi Park protests in

Istanbul were detained, and around 10 journalists were subjected to severe violence and threats from the police. “This violence against journalists is a crime against humanity,” said the report.

Calling for immediate action and punishment for the police perpetrating this violence against journalists, the DFG also reported the threats against journalists.

“When we look at the data for May, we see that more than ten women journalists have been systematically threatened in just one month,” said DFG, adding: “The last case of unlawful practices against women journalists was the arrest of Dicle Müftüoğlu, the co-chair of the Dicle Fırat Journalists Association.”

Calling for Müftüoğlu to be released, the DFG said: “Dicle Müftüoğlu is a journalist and will not be associated with any crime. Therefore, we demand that she be released as soon as possible.”

### Disinformation law, the last abuse

The report also reacted to the “Disinformation lawf which includes new sanctions against internet media, brought to the Parliament by the AKP-MHP government, and stated that this was “an attempt to put the last nail in freedom of the press”.

The DFG warned that this law “will lead to a very dangerous process” and called on the draft law to be withdrawn.”

According to the report, in May: 11 journalists were detained; 11 journalists were harassed; 10 journalists threatened; Journalists who followed the news in 11 incidents were blocked; There was a violation against journalists in prisons; Investigation launched against 4 journalists; Lawsuit filed against 5 journalists; 4 journalists were sentenced to a total of 2 years, 3 months, 14 days in prison and a fine of 24,100 TL.; Trial of 42 journalists continued; The number of journalists in prison increased to 60; A journalist was fired; RTÜK gave 8 penalties to 4 broadcasts; Broadcast ban decision was made 6 times; 8 websites shut down; 14 news access blocked; Access to 3 virtual media content was blocked.



## 1,374 rights advocates faced judicial harassment in Turkey in four months

ANF | TURKEY | 6 JUNE 2022

The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV/HRFT) has released an information note about repression and obstacles faced by human rights defenders in Turkey.

Data of the TİHV information note is collected by Regional Solidarity and Coordination Groups that are established to identify cases of repression and challenges faced by human rights defenders in Adana, Ankara, Diyarbakır, İstanbul, İzmir, Van, and nearby cities.

Accordingly, 23 human rights defenders were sentenced to 1 aggravated life sentence and 211 years, 4 months, and 10 days in prison between 1 January 2022 and 30 April 2022.

### Legal harassment

When the total sum is taken into account, 1,415 individuals were targeted by at least one intervention including judicial harassment, administrative harassment, threats, and reprisals because of activities they undertook and/or were involved in within the human rights field in the first months of 2022.

Within this scope, between 1 January 2022 and 30 April 2022:

- 1,374 individuals faced judicial harassment because of their activities in the human rights field.
- Criminal proceedings were initiated against 998 individuals on the grounds of their activities in the human rights field. Criminal proceedings against 218 individuals started between 1 January 2022 and 30 April 2022. While the criminal proceedings against 780 individuals were maintained, 23 individuals were sentenced to imprisonment and 82 individuals were acquitted. In total, 23 human rights defenders were sentenced to 1 aggravated life sentence and 211 years, 4 months, and 10 days in prison.
- While criminal investigations were launched into 367 individuals between 1 January 2022 and 30 April 2022, pending investigations into 9 were maintained during the same timeframe. Non-prosecution decisions were rendered for 4 individuals.
- 321 individuals' right to liberty and security was violated on the grounds of their activities in the human rights field. 305 individuals were taken into custody within this context, while 16 others were detained.



## Police take at least 16 journalists into custody in Amed

ANF | AMED | 8 JUNE 2022

On Wednesday morning, the Turkish police stormed the apartments of several journalists in Amed.

The journalists taken into custody are: Serdar Altan (co-chairman of the Journalists' Association Dicle-Firat, DFG), Safiye Alagaş (editor of JinNews Women's News Agency), Gülşen Koçuk (editor of JinNews), Aziz Oruç (editor at Mezopotamya News Agency, MA), Ömer Çelik, Suat Doğan, Ramazan Geciken, Berivan Karatorak, Esmir Tunç, Neşe Toprak, Zeynel Abidin Bulut, Mazlum Doğan Güler, Mehmet Şahin, Elif Üngür, İbrahim Koyuncu ve Remziye Temel

The phones and some digital materials of the detained journalists were confiscated. A simultaneous raid was carried out on Jinnews' office in Amed's Yenişehir district. Computers and hard disks, as well as some books and magazines, were also seized during the raid.

The number of those arrested could increase further.

MA editor and DFG chairwoman Dicle Müftüoğlu was arrested on 3 June and released under judicial conditions on 6 June. The journalist is accused of “financing terrorism” for sending money to jailed DIHA correspondents Nedim Türfent and Ziya Ataman.



## Turkey wants to prevent Kurdish demonstrations in Europe

ANF | 8 JUNE 2022

In a series of summonses by the Turkish Foreign Ministry, the Italian ambassador in Ankara was the latest European diplomat to be summoned to the ministry over complaints about alleged demonstrations and activities by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Ambassador Giorgio Marrapodi was briefed by the ministry on Monday about the “concern” caused by a demonstration in the Italian capital Rome that allegedly displayed PKK symbols and pictures of jailed Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan.

As reported by the Turkish newspaper Milliyet, the Italian authorities were asked to ban such demonstrations and activities, which, according to the Turkish ministry, were held “under the cover of non-governmental organisations.”

Earlier, on 3 June, the Greek ambassador in Ankara was summoned to the Turkish Foreign Ministry over concerns about PKK activities in his country. The ministry complained to Ambassador Christodoulos Lazaris that the PKK was carrying out propaganda in Greece, financing it and recruiting new supporters.

The German and French ambassadors in Ankara were summoned to the Turkish Foreign Ministry on 31 May 2022 to protest against events organised by Kurds in those countries. Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said that the ambassadors had been informed of Turkey's unease about the “events organised by the PKK.”

The repeated calls by the Turkish Foreign Ministry to European countries to ban demonstrations and activities of Kurdish activists coincide with the call of the “Defend Kurdistan” campaign to demonstrate on 11 June 2022 against Turkey's ongoing military operation and occupation of Southern Kurdistan and the announced offensive in Northern and Eastern Syria.



## Human bones found under JITEM torture centre in Amed

ANF | AMED | 9 JUNE 2022

Human remains were found during “restoration work” at the former Saraykapı prison in Sur district of Amed (Diyarbakır). The historical site was used as an interrogation, torture and execution site by the Turkish military intelligence agency JITEM in the 1990s. The company YSO İnşaat A.Ş. tried to declare the bone finds in the Cevatpaşa district of Sur as “animal bones” and dispose of them in the rubbish. But later, complete human skeletons were found. The bones in question were loaded onto an excavator and taken away. It is not known where the bones were taken.

### “New bones kept appearing”

Ahmet Kayar, one of the workers involved in the excavation, told the Mezopotamya news agency (MA) about what had happened. Kayar explained that bones had been found at the site again and again since February: “New bones kept appearing. They wanted us to throw them in the rubbish. Our conscience wouldn't allow it. We refused. Then, when they said that those were animal bones, we started putting them in the rubbish. They told us, 'If any archaeological structures or bodies turn up here, our work will be delayed.' Later we came across two complete skeletons.” Kayar said they showed the skeletons to archaeologists. “The archaeologists explained that they were two men. More bones were found under the skeletons. Ashes were also discovered. When we asked who these bones could belong to, we were not given an answer.”



## Justice Vigil carried out by the Şenyaşar family reaches day 447

ANF | URFA | 30 MAY 2022

The Justice Vigil carried out by the Şenyaşar family has reached day 447. 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.

Emine and Ferit Şenyaşar said that those who turn a blind eye to oppression will also lose their humanity.

The family shared a post with the tag “White Rally” in order to draw attention to the rally that will be held in Ankara today organised by the Turkish Medical Association (TTB).

The post said: “Anyone who witnesses and turns a blind eye to oppression is doomed to lose their humanity as well as their dignity one day...”



## Tribute to activist, politician and journalist Dino Frisullo on 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death

ANF | ROME | 6 JUNE 2022

Dino Frisullo was commemorated in his grave in Rome on the 19th anniversary of his death. The activist, politician and journalist who co-founded Kurdistan solidarity was known as 'Heval Dino'. His full name was Damiano Giovanni Frisullo. He died on 5 June 2003 in Perugia of cancer.

Family members, friends and activists of the Kurdish liberation movement came together to visit the grave at the Verano cemetery. Speakers paid tribute to the life of Dino Frisullo, his personality, his work for Kurdish society and talked about shared memories. "Dino's commitment to our people will ensure his constant and grateful memory," said a Kurdish activist.

Dino Frisullo was already active within left-wing structures as a teenager. As a student he was involved in pacifist and environmental groups and organized peace marches against the military infrastructure in Italy. He was a consultant for the Democratic Party, was one of the co-founders of the anti-racist organizations "Rete Antirazzista" and "Senza Confine" and worked as a migration consultant for the city council of Rome. When around 15,000 Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Iraq and Iran were stranded on the southern coast of Italy in 1997, he got on the frontline to help.

From that moment, Dino Frisullo was considered a champion for the defense of the rights of Kurds. He has also repeatedly combined his professional activities with his political commitment. In 1997 he founded the association "Kurdistan Azad". In the same year he took part in the "European peace train Musa Anter". The initiative was brought into being by the "Hannover Appeal" in order to "enforce the process of democratization in Turkey and the indispensable respect for human rights" and to protest against the war in North Kurdistan. He took part in delegation trips to Kurdistan several times, including Newroz in 1998. On 21 March of that year, he was arrested in Amed.

He ended up in one of the notorious maximum security prisons in Amed, held in isolation and tortured. The arrest warrant was lifted after forty days, but Frisullo was still not allowed to leave the country. It was not until 16 June 1998, when he was sentenced to a year on appeal, that he was expelled from the country.

When Abdullah Öcalan had to leave Syria in October 1998 and embarked on a months-long odyssey through Europe—at the end of which he was kidnapped in Kenya and deported to Turkey—he stayed in Italy for a while. It was 12 November 1998 when Öcalan landed in Rome. The first groups of Kurds in exile arrived there on the same day and settled down for a vigil in front of the military hospital. It didn't take long for them to grow into a huge crowd that sat out in the square for months in wintry temperatures demanding political status for Öcalan. Dino Frisullo was also among them. At the time, he was taking part in a hunger strike demanding freedom for Abdullah Öcalan and a solution to the Kurdish question. He was also the one who initiated the renaming of the square as "Piazza Kurdistan".

In 2002, Dino Frisullo helped found the Rome-based association “Ararat” and became its chairman. Shortly thereafter, he said goodbye to public events because he was getting ill.



## Opinion

### Is occupied Serêkaniyê a “safe zone”?

ANF | 5 JUNE 2022 | BY BERITAN SARYA | CEMIL EBDO

The Turkish president last week announced a new “operation” in self-ruled northeastern Syria. The goal, he said, is to create a 30-kilometer-deep “security zone” along the southern border. This is not the first time Ankara has threatened to enforce a so-called buffer zone along Turkey’s southern border and Syria’s northern border. In the process, all Rojava towns—except Heseke—are to be brought under Turkish control. The last threat of this kind led to a war of aggression and the occupation of Serêkaniyê (Ras al-Ain) and Girê Spî (Tal Abyad) in October 2019. The local population continues to suffer from the consequences to this day.

The occupation of Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî had been preceded by demands from the Turkish leadership for the establishment of a buffer zone, similar to today. In August 2019, the United States and Turkey agreed on a “peace zone.” Part of the agreement included the establishment of a joint operations center on the Turkish-Syrian border. Two months later, the invasion began with the incursion into Serêkaniyê, one of the oldest Kurdish towns. The Turkish state had repeatedly tried to take control of the town since 2012 with the help of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. With the occupation in 2019, a systematic restructuring of the population began.

Since the proclamation of the autonomous administration in 2012, all ethnic and religious identities of Serêkaniyê have lived together in harmony and organized themselves in popular councils. In two and a half years of the Turkish jihadist invasion, hundreds of murders have been committed in the city by the occupiers, and the number of unreported cases is probably many times higher. Conservative estimates put the displacement rate at 85 percent of the original population. Hundreds of thousands of people live in makeshift refugee camps near Ain Issa and elsewhere. In place of the displaced population, Islamists loyal to Erdoğan and their families from other parts of Syria have been settled. The situation in occupied Serêkaniyê and the crimes against humanity there show what a “security zone” means for the Turkish state.

#### Serêkaniyê under the rule of the Baathists

Serêkaniyê is located east of Girê Spî, west of Dirbesiyê and north of Til Temir. The city is cut by the border and separated from the Ceylanpınar district of Urfa. In the long history of Serêkaniyê, Kurds, Arabs, Syrians, Chechens, Turkmen, Armenians and Yazidis have settled there and lived together peacefully. The

first decisive demographic restructuring came from the Baath regime in 1974. When the Baath regime launched the “Arab Belt” project in Serêkaniyê, as in all of Rojava, the name of the city and the Kurdish villages were Arabized. Arabs were brought to the region from various parts of Syria, new villages were built, and the proportion of Arabs in the population was increased. A significant part of the Christians of Serêkaniyê emigrated to Syrian cities such as Aleppo and Latakia or to Europe even before the civil war in Syria began.

### **Attack of the Turkish-backed mercenary troops**

Even when the civil war began in 2011, there was a significant Christian population, consisting of Syriacs and Armenians, in addition to Muslim and Yazidi Kurds, Arabs, Circassians and Turkmen. When mercenaries from various al-Qaeda factions, along with collaborators from the so-called Kurdish National Council (ENKS), were sent across the border into Serêkaniyê by the Turkish state on November 8, 2012, and fighting began, a new wave of refugees from the city began. The mercenaries, who controlled most of the city, established a regime of terror by the grace of Turkey. A Christian church in the center of the city was occupied by mercenaries, vandalized and turned into a headquarters. Many residents were expelled from Serêkaniyê and forced to flee to Turkey. Turkey aimed to expel the population and had already set up a reception camp for the displaced at the border.

From a still self-governing residential district, residents together with the YPG/YPJ (People’s/Women’s Defense Units) have liberated their town step by step and driven the mercenaries out of Serêkaniyê. Turkey tried to prevent the liberation by launching new waves of attacks. By November 5, 2013, Ankara had launched four major waves of attacks by militiamen. The Turkish government was not content to simply send its mercenaries across the borders and support them with logistics and ammunition. The Turkish army provided fire support to the jihadist mercenaries with tank attacks across the border. Turkey-backed ISIS attacks on the city then began. ISIS carried out many attacks on the villages of Serêkaniyê in 2014-2015 and perpetrated massacres against the civilian population. In the process, the terrorist militia met fierce resistance from the YPG and YPJ. Both units suffered hundreds of casualties in their defensive struggle against the ISIS attacks. In May 2015, the YPG and YPJ liberated the last villages under ISIS control in Serêkaniyê as part of the Şehîd Rûbar Qamişlo offensive. During this time, many people fled the region.

### **Safe and free life in self-governed Serêkaniyê**

In the period between the liberation from Al-Qaeda and ISIS and the occupation by Turkey that began on October 9, 2019, a system of grassroots self-government was established in Serêkaniyê under difficult conditions. The administration of the city was taken over by a people’s council, which was organized within the framework of the self-government of Cizîrê Canton proclaimed in 2014. All peoples and faiths that lived in Serêkaniyê found their representation in this assembly. People could freely live their faith in the liberated Christian churches, mosques and Yazidi centers. Agriculture developed and a health academy was established. However, the aggression by Turkish troops across the border never completely stopped. Again and again, civilians lost their lives because of this. But despite these attacks by the Turkish state, Serêkaniyê was a free and safe city. More and more people, attracted by a free and equal life in safety, began to return to the region.

### **“Security zone”: place of massacres and looting**

That changed on October 9, 2019. The war of aggression represented the end of security, brotherhood and peace in the region. Serêkaniyê became a place of massacres and torture. According to the Committee for Refuge and Migration, at least 386 civilians were killed in Serêkaniyê, including 48 women and 12 minors, between October 2019 and December 2021. 48 people were murdered by torture, and eleven were even executed in public places. The Turkish state used white phosphorus against the population during the invasion. Such use falls under the ban on chemical weapons. The Human Rights Association of Cizîrê documented 33 fire deaths caused by Turkish phosphorus bombs. Ten of them were members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). In addition, 232 cases of torture were documented by the end of last year. There is still no trace of 152 abductees. 1,200 stores and workshops and 5,500 houses belonging to the people of Serêkaniyê were confiscated by the occupying forces.

### **The demographic structure of the city was changed**

With the Turkish occupation, 85 percent of the original population of the city fled. The area around Serêkaniyê includes 140 villages. 55 villages with a Kurdish majority are completely abandoned. The villages of Xirbet Cemo, Dawudiyê and about 80 to 90 percent of the villages surrounding Ain Issa have been destroyed and Turkish military bases built in their place. In addition, members of the mercenary alliance “Syrian National Army” (SNA), which is loyal to Turkey, desecrated Yazidi cemeteries in search of valuable grave goods.

### **Site of the ISIS reorganization**

The city of Girê Spî was under the control of jihadists since 2012 and the ISIS terrorist group since June 2014. In February 2015, the SDF launched a liberation offensive named after martyr Rûbar Qamişlo. The two starting points of the large-scale attack were Serêkaniyê and the village of Majdal, southeast of Til Temir. As part of this offensive, Mebrûka, Silûk and Girê Spî were liberated and the cantons of Kobanê and Cizîrê were connected. At the time, Mebrûka, which administratively belonged to Serêkaniyê, played the role of a headquarters for ISIS and received support from Turkey. The YPG and YPJ liberated this place at the greatest sacrifice. After the establishment of the “security zone” in 2019, Mebrûka once again fell to the jihadists. Mebrûka and Serêkaniyê became places of ISIS reorganization.

According to the Cizîrê Human Rights Association and the Association for Flight and Migration, at least 2,000 jihadists and their families have settled in the city and its villages since the occupation of Serêkaniyê. 55 of these families have been identified as ISIS families, the majority originating from Iraq. Many former ISIS jihadists can also be found in the mercenary groups “Sultan Murad Brigade,” “Furqat al-Hamza” and “Ahrar al-Sharqiya” deployed in Serêkaniyê.

### **The ISIS flag is openly displayed**

A specific incident that showed the whole world that Serêkaniyê is a safe hinterland for ISIS occurred on October 25, 2020. Following Erdoğan’s threats against France over Muhammad cartoons, members of mercenary groups loyal to Turkey gathered in Serêkaniyê and burned a French flag. During the propa-

ganda action, ISIS flags were displayed and corresponding slogans were shouted. Even the governor of Urfa confirmed the display of the black flag.

### **Attack planned on Sina prison in occupied territory**

The confessions of ISIS commander Abdullah Ismail Ahmad, who is currently in pre-trial detention for the attack on Sina Prison in Heseke last January, also reported the role of occupied Serêkaniyê for ISIS in his statements. Ahmad stated that he received the order for the attack on the detention center, where thousands of ISIS jihadists are held, from the Turkish intelligence service MIT. He said that the “ISIS governor” of Heseke was located in the occupation zone around Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî and was working with MIT there. Accordingly, the ISIS jihadists who had been freed from prison were also supposed to have been brought to the regions of northern Syria occupied by Turkey.



# 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.

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