

# THE İMRALI POST

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

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# Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

## Communist Party of Swaziland holds seminar “Justice for Kurds, freedom for Öcalan”

ANF | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

The opening speech of the seminar was delivered by Titus Vilakati, CPS's Head of International Relations. Vilakati underlined that the freedom struggle of the Kurdish people was important to them. He revealed that they organized the seminar to learn and understand the Kurdish people, their leader, Abdullah Öcalan, who has led the cause of freedom and the situation of all political prisoners.

Mahmoud Patel, President of the South African Kurdish Working Group (KHRAG), was invited to the seminar as a speaker. In a visual presentation, Patel talked about the war waged by the Turkish state with international support from the First World War to the present. In the second part of the seminar, Patel discussed the history of the PKK, its resistance and the position of Öcalan in this struggle.

In another presentation, Patel addressed the role of the CIA, Mossad and NATO in the international conspiracy against Öcalan. Citing the İmralı system that the Kurdish People's Leader has been subjected to for the last 24 years, Patel called attention to the similarities in South Africa during the Apartheid regime in order to better understand the situation of both the Kurdish people and Öcalan.

After a 40-minute presentation, CPS International Secretary Pius Vilakati pointed out that the Kurdish people's struggle for freedom was endorsed by their own struggle and that success was possible through the unity of the peoples. Vilakati added that Sakine Cansız was murdered by the Turkish state because the Kurdish women's revolution was influential.

Titus Vilakati, another CPS director who attended the seminar, underlined the internationalist reliance of his party, citing CPS Secretary General Thokozane Kenneth Kunene who said that “the freedom struggle of the Kurdish, Palestinian and Western Saharan peoples is our struggle”.

Participants stressed that the CPS should fight for the freedom of the Kurdish leader. In conclusion, they called for a common struggle.

The Communist Party of Swaziland has long been fighting the monarchy in the country.

## Conference for Öcalan's freedom kicks off in Cape Town

ANF | 28 FEBRUARY 2023

A conference titled 'Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan, Peace and Stability for the World' organized by the Kurdish Human Rights Working Group and the Syria Freedom for Öcalan Initiative has started in Cape Town, South Africa. Representatives of numerous groups from North Kurdistan, North-East Syria and South Africa are attending the two-day conference.

South African National Congress Spokesperson Cameron Dugmore, South African Communist Party Representative Solli Mbella, South African Trade Unions Congress Spokesperson Meloyne de Bruyn, Syria Freedom for Öcalan Initiative Spokesperson Ferzende Munzur and South African Kurdish Human Rights Working Group Co-Chair Mahmoud Patel delivered opening speeches.

The importance of Öcalan's physical freedom for the solution to the Kurdish question and world peace are being discussed at the conference which has attracted intensive attention.

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## Nearly 900,000 signatures for Öcalan's freedom collected in North-East Syria

NUJIYAN ADAR | QAMISHLO | 3 MARCH 2023

In cooperation with the Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Initiative-Syria, the North and East Syrian People's Initiative has recently launched a campaign demanding to lift the isolation in İmralı prison, allow family and lawyer visits, and ensure the physical freedom of the Kurdish leader. With the conclusion of the campaign, the signatures collected across North and East Syria will be submitted to the Asrın Law Office and then to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) via the Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Initiative-Syria.

In an interview with ANF, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) General Assembly Member and Spokesperson for the campaign, Perwîn Yusif, said that the campaign was completed in the Cizire Region and that nearly 900,000 signatures have been collected so far. She said: "The peoples of North and East Syria are prospering and growing with the philosophy of Öcalan. We have been struggling for years in order to be worthy of Öcalan's efforts and sacrifice and to ensure his physical freedom."

Yusif noted: "The petition was launched in order to break the silence of the international forces and to criticize those who turn a blind eye to the violations of Öcalan's rights. This campaign was promoted by all peoples, and endorsed by institutions, organizations and political parties in the region. The collected signatures will be submitted to the CPT, which is internationally tasked with preventing mistreatment and

torture of prisoners but is currently acting hypocritically. The fact that the CPT does not make a statement after its visit to İmralı is just hypocrisy.”

According to Yusif, “The public demands that these institutions and organizations act in accordance with their norms and laws. They should reveal the truth based on their duties and responsibilities. We must break the isolation through our struggle. Our goal is not only to get information about Öcalan, but also to ensure his freedom. It's time for his physical freedom because he struggled for the freedom of millions with his ideas and philosophy. For this very reason, he should be allowed to live freely among people. If the peoples of North-East Syria can maintain a peaceful life, it is thanks to its architect, Öcalan. It is Öcalan himself who defied the capitalist system's policy of pitting people against each other. It is unacceptable for such a genius person to be held behind bars.”

### **Almost 900,000 signatures collected**

Yusif continued: “Committees were established in every city for the campaign and these committees carried out the campaign with the support of the communes and assemblies in cities. Signatures were collected from each volunteer officially aged 15 and above. We visited each house and commune. The signature campaign in Cizire Region has ended. The campaign continues in some regions due to the impact of the earthquake in Turkey.”

All nationalities living in the region are also endorsing the campaign. The campaign is not over yet, but we have already reached our target. Nearly 900,000 signatures have been collected. We will soon announce the outcome of the campaign in a press release.”

### **Our people endorse campaign enthusiastically**

Yusif emphasized that they would follow the CPT's response to the petition. She added: “Our burden is increasing gradually. Our people consider themselves responsible for ensuring the physical freedom of Öcalan and will continue their actions to do so without interruption. In order to do that, the struggle must have a high level of participation. People's participation in the campaign was massive. They once again proved their loyalty to Öcalan with this campaign. They don't just give signatures; they also want these signatures to get results. They will monitor the campaign.

Our people are waiting for CPT's response. Our actions and campaigns will continue uninterrupted. The North and East Syria People's Initiative will keep up with the outcome of the campaign. The campaign is not restricted to the Kurdish people, it also concerns other peoples. The collected signatures represent the will of the people, and our people will protect their will. This silence must end. Institutions and organizations should respond to the demand of the people.”

# Prisons in Turkey

## Five inmates in Diyarbakır 1 and 2 High Security Prison deported

ANF | AMED | 1 MARCH 2023

Four prisoners in Diyarbakır High Security Prison No. 1 and one prisoner in High Security Prison No. 2 were deported to jails in other provinces. It was not learned for what reason the inmates were deported.

Hacı Geçiken, Onur Kangal and two prisoners whose names could not be learned, were deported from Prison No. 1, while a prisoner named Recep Bal was deported from High Security Prison No. 2.

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## TJA Spokesperson Ayşe Gökkan and six prisoners deported from Diyarbakır jail

ANF | AMED | 2 MARCH 2023

According to the information received, seven female prisoners, including the Term Spokesperson of the Free Women's Movement (Tevgera Jinên Azad-TJA) Ayşe Gökkan, were deported from Diyarbakır Women's Closed Prison.

Information on where Ayşe Gökkan, Dilan Dağ, Emine Abiş, Emine Erol, Beritan Yaşar, Zerife Can and Rozerin Söyler were taken to and their situation has not yet been received. Lawyers also said that they had no information.

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# Military aggression and occupation

## PKK responds to statements by Swedish officials

ANF | 26 FEBRUARY 2023

The PKK Foreign Relations Committee said in a press release that “in recent days, a number of Swedish officials have been trying to criminalize the Kurdistan Freedom Movement by making unwarranted, baseless and untrue accusations against our party and movement.”

The statement added: “We would like to state from the outset that the PKK is a political party that works for the liberation of Kurdistan and the freedom of the Kurdish people and has paid a great price for this. Our party is a movement committed to human, moral, conscientious and democratic values. We have been doing politics based on these values for 45 years since the party’s foundation in 1978. Consequently, our party has no relations with criminal individuals and circles and is against such circles.

Despite the fact that this is the truth, the Turkish state and its collaborators do not hesitate to resort to all kinds of lies, deceit and slander in order to criminalize our party. Ambassador Oscar Stenström, the head of the delegation negotiating with Turkey on behalf of Sweden, has recently joined the bandwagon of these baseless accusations. In an interview with a Swedish radio channel, Mr. Stenström said that our party was financed by a number of criminals in Sweden who are involved in crimes such as extortion, weapons and drugs, and mentioned the name *Kurdish Fox*.”

The statement continued: “Mr. Stenström’s statement is far from the truth. There is no such thing. This is an entirely fabricated accusation to please Mr. Stenström’s Turkish interlocutors. The statement also contains inconsistencies within itself. We do not know who the “Kurdish Fox” is and we have no relationship with him. In Turkey, even a word in favor of the PKK is a criminal offense and punishable by imprisonment. There are many people who have come from Turkey and sought asylum in Sweden because they were accused of saying something in favor of the PKK or giving food to a PKK member. Mr. Stenström claims that the “Kurdish Fox” is wanted in Sweden for crimes he committed and that he helped the PKK in Sweden, but that he escaped to Turkey and is at large there. Any way one looks at it, this is a very inconsistent statement.”

The PKK underlined that “such statements are not limited to Mr. Stenström alone. Recently, in the framework of the NATO membership negotiations, in order to please the Turkish government and Erdogan, a number of government officials, such as Foreign Minister Tobias Billström, have been making similar statements. We would like to reject these accusations outright. The Swedish government can improve its relations with Turkey, nobody has anything against that. But we say: Don't negotiate and bargain over us, over the Kurds, don't support Erdogan who has blood on his hands and is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in our country.

The Kurdish people and the Swedish people have a long-standing and constantly growing friendship. We find this friendship valuable, attach great importance to it and want it to develop further. The conscientious Swedish people and public know and see for what purpose these baseless statements and accusations are made. No matter what anyone says, we will continue to protect humanitarian, moral, conscientious and democratic values, walk on the right path, liberate our country from occupation and free our people.”

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## HPG: Our people should not believe the Turkish special war media

ANF | BEHDINAN | 28 FEBRUARY 2023

According to the Press Centre of the People’s Defence Forces (HPG), the Turkish army continues to attack guerrilla positions in the Medya Defence Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

On Monday, 24 artillery attacks were carried out on the Girê Cûdî and Girê FM resistance areas and 71 attacks were carried out on guerrilla positions near the village of Sîda and in the Çemço area with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons. Sîda and Çemço belong to the Sheladize sub-district near the town of Amadiya in Duhok governorate and have been the focus of the occupation forces since the partial withdrawal of the Turkish army from the Zap region at the end of last year.

On the other hand, HPG denied the reports in Turkish media, saying: “It was reported in the Turkish special war media that Ramazan Güneş is a member of our movement and was caught in a point operation by the MIT in Sulaymaniyah. This report is a complete lie. Ramazan Güneş ran away from our ranks three years ago and later got married and settled in Southern Kurdistan. There is no contact between him and our movement. Two months ago, Ramazan Güneş surrendered to the Turkish state in Duhok. However, the Turkish media is trying to portray MIT as successful during this period with a fabricated scenario. Our patriotic people and the public of Turkey should not believe the Turkish special war media and the reports based on a lie by MIT.”

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## SDF announces the outcome of Turkish attacks against North-East Syria in February

ANF | 1 MARCH 2023

The Media Center of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the outcome of Turkish attacks against North-East Syria during the month of February.



According to the statement, the Turkish occupation and its mercenaries carried out 24 armed attacks, employing heavy weaponry and tanks following the catastrophic earthquake on February 6th. In addition, Turkish reconnaissance aircraft carried out two strikes against the civilian population in North-East Syrian territories. On the other hand, the Turkish reconnaissance aircraft flew over the region on no less than 348 occasions, while Turkish military aircraft and helicopters flagrantly breached Syrian airspace 27 times.

The SDF statement released on Wednesday includes the following:

“Despite the severe complications resulting from the catastrophic earthquake that struck Syria and Turkey, as well as the international community’s appeals to deescalate violence and facilitate relief efforts, the Turkish occupation’s belligerent practices against our territories in north and eastern Syria persist as a top priority for the ruling party in Turkey and its armed mercenary groups occupying northern Syria. Once more, the occupation and its mercenaries have opted to supplant sympathy for the earthquake victims with war and hatred against our regions, thereby ratcheting up their aggressive attacks.

Following the catastrophic earthquake on February 6th, the Turkish occupation and its mercenaries carried out 24 armed attacks, employing heavy weaponry and tanks. Furthermore, Turkish reconnaissance aircraft executed two strikes against civilian populations in our territories. Additionally, records indicate that Turkish reconnaissance aircraft flew over the region on no less than 348 occasions, while Turkish military aircraft and helicopters flagrantly breached Syrian airspace 27 times.

Furthermore, the occupation has once again resorted to its dirty intelligence tactics, as evidenced by its involvement in a detonation of IEDs in a civilian car in the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in Aleppo and another in the city of Hasakah.

The hostile attacks perpetrated by Turkey throughout February caused the martyrdom of four innocent civilians, among them a 70-year-old elderly displaced person from Afrin. Furthermore, three individuals were injured, including a woman. Such aggressions also caused severe damage to civilians’ properties and farmlands, preventing them from accessing their crops.

In an attempt to conceal their reprehensible crimes, the Turkish occupation has yet again resorted to fabricating lies to justify their egregious killing of civilians. Turkish intelligence-affiliated media outlets have propagated the unsubstantiated claim that they have “killed” a hypothetical member of our forces, Khalil Mounji, whom they accuse of being responsible for the Istanbul attack. We categorically assert that the mentioned person has no affiliation with our forces and is, in fact, a civilian far removed from military and political activities. This murder crime is added to the list of crimes committed by the occupation against our people, which persist to this day.

As the Turkish occupation persists in its brutal aggressions that claim more lives in the region, our forces are abiding by their moral and humanitarian commitments to respond in a manner that prioritizes the provision of essential aid to those affected people. Such measures include the exercise of self-restraint and refraining from succumbing to Turkish provocations.

The Turkish occupation believes that the preoccupation of the international community and humanitarian organizations with the recent earthquake disaster is a timely opportunity to deflect attention from mounting pressure to cease its vicious attacks against our territories and to dissuade Ankara from proceeding with

preparations for a potential invasion shortly. Such actions occur amid the absence of viable international legal mechanisms to hold the occupation and its mercenary forces accountable for their atrocities against the region's inhabitants, encompassing forced displacement, demographic manipulation, and targeted killings.

Based on that, we reiterate our plea to the international community and international human rights organizations to perform their functions by implementing efficient and genuine mechanisms that deter the Turkish occupation's ongoing aggressions, given the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the region and the mounting security threats posed by the ISIS terrorist organization. The latter is trying to exploit the dire humanitarian conditions caused by the earthquake disaster to reorganize, regroup, and perpetrate mass-scale attacks.”



## HPG releases balance sheet of war for February

ANF | BEHDINAN | 1 MARCH 2023

The Press Center of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) published the balance sheet of war in the guerrilla-held Medya Defence Zones for the month of February. The report contains facts and figures on cross-border air and ground attacks by Turkey in southern Kurdistan as well as results of the actions carried out by the HPG and the YJA STAR (Free Women's Troops) in the field of self-defence.

The HPG balance sheet for the month of February includes the following:

“The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla, the leading force in the struggle to protect the existence and secure the freedom of our oppressed peoples, continues to defend the territories of Kurdistan at all times of the year, even under the harsh conditions of winter. In this sense, our forces, which have reformed themselves according to the principle of the Guerrilla of Democratic Modernity, dealt a series of heavy blows with a wide tactical spectrum to the Turkish occupation army in the first week of February.

On the basis of the call of the Kurdistan Communities Union, which represents the political will of our people and our revolution, to rest the weapons so that a solidarity healing process of the wounds of our peoples can take place as a result of the earthquakes of 6 February, our forces have stopped their actions. The People's Defense Centre (HSM) Headquarters Command announced the decision to put the requirements of this decision into practice on February 11.

Our freedom struggle and our forces, which are based on fundamental human values and social morality as basic principles, have fulfilled their responsibility in this difficult time with great seriousness and meticulousness. In contrast, the Turkish occupying army under the leadership of Hulusi Akar continues to escalate its attacks against the guerrillas. The Medya Defence Zones have been bombarded countless times by fighter jets, attack helicopters, tanks, artillery and howitzers. These attacks have probably not been satisfactory because, in addition, the guerrilla resistance positions have been intensively attacked with chemical weapons and unconventional bombs. In particular, our positions in the Zap have come under increased at-

tack in recent days, including with phosphorus shells and other chemical warfare agents. On 9 February, our companion Mazlum Dêrşewî fell as a martyr in the course of the bombardments in the Zap region.

Instead of mobilising all available resources of the state and showing humanitarian behaviour to heal the wounds of peoples in Turkey, the AKP/MHP regime and the Turkish army subordinated to it are pumping all resources into the war to maintain their power and are committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Zap. This fascist regime, which is pouring all its resources into its genocidal war of extermination against the Kurdish people, thus throwing the whole country into a spiral of misery, has shown once again through its handling of the earthquake that it is the enemy of all peoples.

Our forces, who have stopped their actions in response to the call of our movement, have given the necessary response 47 times to defend themselves against these massive attacks. In the process, 18 occupiers were punished, and one other was injured. Our struggle, which has been sustained by the sacrifices of our oppressed people and the commitment of our martyrs to this day, will continue with great determination. The guerrillas will carry out their responsibilities according to the current phase, but there will continue to be necessary response to the ongoing extermination attacks on the basis of legitimate self-defence.”

### **Balance sheet of war**

HPG announced the balance sheet of war from the 1st to the 28th of February as follows:

#### **Attacks by the Turkish army:**

Our forces recorded at least 30 air strikes by fighter jets and 18 attacks by attack helicopters in the Medya Defence Zones. These bombings were primarily directed against guerrilla resistance positions. During the same period, the areas in question were shelled 874 times by howitzers, mortars, tanks and heavy weapons.

The guerrilla resistance positions were bombed with phosphorus-enriched shells, unconventional bombs and chemical weapons 142 times.

#### **Military equipment destroyed by our forces:**

4 military positions; 5 camera surveillance systems; 1 A4 machine gun; 1 B7 machine gun; 1 grenade launcher; 1 Jammer

In addition, one combat helicopter was damaged by our forces.

## Ata on day 209 of protest in front of OPCW against Turkish use of chemical weapons

ANF | THE HAGUE | 1 MARCH 2023

Xosnav Ata, who lost his nieces Gülperin Ata and Mihriban Ata in the chemical attacks of the Turkish state, has been carrying out a vigil in front of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for 209 days to urge the organization to investigate Turkish chemical attacks against guerrilla troops.

French activist Geraldine Franck, who visited Xosnav Ata during his vigil today, said: “We paid a solidarity visit to Xosnav Ata who has been staging a protest in front of the OPCW for 209 days. Despite the various reports that expose the Turkish use of chemical weapons, it is unacceptable that the OPCW remains silent. We urge them to do their duty.”

Pleased with the visit, Xosnav Ata emphasized that he would continue his protest until achieving the goal.

### Background

The fact that the Organisation for the Prohibition of the Use of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has no interest in reports on Turkish use of chemical weapons in Kurdistan has been known for some time. However, it is also no secret that this is a violation of its obligations. To bring this to public attention, Xwaşnav Ata launched a “Justice Vigil” in front of the OPCW headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands on August 5. Every day between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., Kurdish activist from Germany appear in front of the building to remind those responsible of the reasons for the creation of the OPCW and to demand their action against Turkey's use of toxic weapons in Kurdistan.

“The Turkish state killed my niece with chemicals. Why won't you investigate?” is written on a purple cardboard sign held by Ata. It refers to the guerrilla fighter Binevs Agal (Gülperin Ata), who died at the end of May while resisting the Turkish invasion at Kuro Jahro in the Zap region of southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). The People's Defense Forces (HPG) had said about the circumstances of the death that the Turkish army had fired chemical warfare agents over several days against guerrilla positions where Binevs Agal was in action. For months, the HPG has been reporting daily documented chemical weapons attacks by the military of the Turkish state. In recent years, the Turkish state has been attacking guerrilla areas with chemical weapons and various unconventional bombs in an unprecedented manner. According to HPG's balance sheet of war in February, the Turkish army used phosphorus-containing shells, banned bombs and chemical weapons 142 times.

But the OPCW, of which the Turkish state has been a member since 1997, prefers to remain silent. Despite all the reports by the HPG on the use of chemical weapons, calls by Kurdish institutions, research results by relevant organisations and individuals, as well as mass protests by the Kurdish diaspora community, the OPCW is not willing to become active regarding the accusations against Ankara. Even attempts by Kurdish delegations to hold talks with the organisation's officials have been repeatedly refused. And

even the receipt of a dossier with concrete documents and evidence of the use of chemical weapons was out of the question for the OPCW. Turkey can break the international law of war with impunity.

“I do not and will not accept this,” says Xwaşnav Ata. He states it cannot be that “the children of the Kurdish people” are murdered by brutal chemical weapons attacks by the Turkish state, and the OPCW stands by and watches. “The public should know that the only goal of our society is to experience justice. We want the OPCW to investigate Turkey’s chemical weapons use and punish it accordingly. As long as this demand remains unfulfilled, I will not end my protest.”

Another of Ata’s nieces was martyred in Dersim last December.



## KDP forces establish military bases to protect Turkish army in Metîna

ANF | 2 MARCH 2023

While the historical resistance of HPG and YJA Star guerrillas against the attacks launched by the Turkish army on Zap, Metîna and Avaşîn within the borders of Bashur Kurdistan on 14 April 2022 continues, the KDP’s cooperation with the invaders was once again exposed.

The KDP forces have cut the logistics going to the HPG and YJA Star guerrillas, besieged the guerrillas in some places, preventing them from moving and making way for the armored vehicles of the Turkish soldiers. This time the KDP came to the aid of the invading army in Girê Hekarî (Hakkari Hill). ANF recorded the help provided to Turkish army.

The KDP’s work on this region started in July last year and intensified as of August. First, KDP forces started to build roads, headquarters and shelters in the Hill Ortê area of Metîna, accompanied by armored vehicles. In August, they made a road for the Turkish army with buckets between the Girê Hekarî and Girê Amediyê Resistance Areas.

All the services the KDP did for the Turkish army could not prevent the resistance carried out by the guerrilla forces. HPG and YJA Star guerrillas, carried out many “Revolutionary Operations” that shocked the invaders in the autumn. On 26-27 November 2022 in Girê Hekarî, they forced the Turkish army out of that position.

The KDP forces came to the rescue of the invading army stuck in Girê Hekarî, They established military bases around the hill the Turkish army tried to take over but failed. In order to prevent the guerrilla forces from attacking Girê Hekarî again, the flag of the Federal Kurdistan Region Administration was hoisted on the bases established on three different hills.

In the same way, ANF documented the fact that the flag of the Federated Kurdistan Region Administration was hoisted on the military base on Girê Sêdarê hill, which is the only way to Girê Hekarî, to protect the Turkish army in the face of the new actions by the guerrillas. We could not find any clear information about exactly which forces were on this base.

### Road from border to hill for tanks

The KDP positions are similarly located in the mountains towards Amediye. Turkish army positions in this area are still there, under the flag of the Kurdistan Regional Administration. It is noteworthy that such a change was made right after the Turkish army withdrew its forces from this point, called the “Commando Field”, last December.

Girê Hekarî, which has strategic importance both because it is about 15 kilometers from the Turkey-Iraq border and because it is the highest point in Amediyê, connected to the border line by a new land route built by the KDP. The Turkish army can transport tanks, armored vehicles and military supplies to Girê Hekarî through this road.

Currently, only the forces of the Turkish army are on Girê Hekarî hill in the Metîna area, east of the Zap water. Thanks to the resistance by the guerrillas, the invading forces had to withdraw, unable to hold on to the other hills around this position. The reason why the KDP is constructing roads and building bases around Girê Hekarî is to ensure that the last stronghold of the Turkish army in the region does not fall.



## A timeline of Turkish and KDP attacks against Shengal

AWYER BOTAN | SHENGAL | 2 MARCH 2023

The Yazidi town of Shengal (Sinjar), which was subjected to genocide by ISIS mercenaries on August 3, 2014, was liberated on November 13, 2015, after months of resistance led by HPG guerrillas and Shengal Resistance Units (YBŞ). The people of Shengal formed their self-defence and self-government as the greatest response to further massacres and betrayal in Shengal.

Having declared its Democratic Autonomous Administration, Shengal became the target of both the Turkish state and South Kurdistan’s ruling party, KDP. While armed groups affiliated with the KDP and the Turkish army launched attacks in 2017, the central Iraqi government also resorted to various methods to eliminate the autonomy in Shengal.

The Turkish state has recently taken action for further massacres in Shengal. YBŞ commanders Pîr Çeko and Agir Cefri were killed on February 27, and Yazidi Public Security Executive Member Şêrzad Şemo Kasım was killed on March 1 by Turkish air strikes. These attacks by the Turkish state took place right after an operation by the YBŞ and Shengal Asayish against MIT (Turkish intelligence service) agents deployed to Shengal by the KDP. Two MIT agents, named Seed Casim Mirad and Selah Berces were cap-

tured during the operations of the Shengal security forces, which were carried out on February 24 and dubbed “Revenge Operations”.

### **Timeline of attacks ongoing for 6 years**

The attacks of KDP-affiliated mercenaries and Turkish state forces against Shengal have continued uninterruptedly since 2017. Below is a timeline of these attacks, during which many Yazidi politicians, revolutionaries, fighters and civilians who led the liberation of Shengal were massacred:

**March 3, 2017:** The group called “Roj Peshmergas” affiliated with the KDP attacked the Khanasor (Xanesor) district of Shengal. Nazê Nayif, a member of the Yazidi Free Women's Movement (TAJÊ), 7 YBŞ fighters and HPG guerrillas were killed in the attack of the peshmergas trained by the Turkish state in Bashiqa. Journalist Nûjjiyan Erhan, who was seriously injured in this attack, died on April 22.

**April 24- 25, 2017:** Shengal, located approximately 170 km away from Turkey’s borders, was attacked by Turkish fighter jets for the first time. The Çıra Radio station was also targeted in the air strike that hit the villages of Kesre and Amude in Shengal and the Qereçox mountain of Derik, killing a young person. On the same night, 20 YPG/YPJ fighters were martyred in the simultaneous attacks against Rojava Kurdistan.

**August 15, 2018:** Yazidi Coordination Member Mam Zekî Şengalî (İsmail Özden) and his security guard Mahir Serhat Şengalî were martyred in an air strike carried out by the Turkish army in Shengal.

**December 13, 2018:** Three civilians from Kobanê, Xelîl Xalid Cio, Mistefa Hecî and Mehmud Xan Temo, were killed in a Turkish airstrike in Shengal. These civilians had come to Shengal from Kobanê to earn a livelihood from the water mill business.

**November 19, 2019:** Turkish drones carried out an attack on Khanasor in the morning hours and 6 fighters of the Shengal Defence Units (YBŞ) were martyred.

**January 15, 2020:** Shengal Resistance Units (YBŞ) Commander Zerdeşt Şengalî and fighters Şervan Cila and Êzdîn Şengalî were martyred in an airstrike on the Dugirê village of Shengal.

**June 15, 2020:** Turkish fighter jets carried out an air strike on Shengal, Maxmur and Medya Defence Zones at night. Khanasor and Serdesht hospitals were targeted in the attack in Shengal.

**30 June 2020:** Civilians who took shelter on Mount Shengal to protect themselves from ISIS were subjected to air attacks by the Turkish state.

**August 23-26, 2020:** The Turkish army carried out a three-day attack targeting several points in Medya Defence Zones and Shengal. 2 people were martyred when Turkish drones targeted a vehicle on August 26 in the Behrava village of Khanasor.

**November 9, 2020:** The village of Barê in Shengal was once again attacked by Turkish drones. The attack killed 2 YBŞ fighters and injured 2 people.

**August 16, 2021:** YBŞ Commander Seîd Hesên and YBŞ fighter Îsa Xwedada were martyred in an attack by Turkish drones in Shengal. Seid Hesên led the Yazidi freedom struggle from battles to politics and diplomacy.

**August 17, 2021:** Turkish fighter jets targeted a hospital in the village of Sikênîyê on the slopes of Mount Shengal. The attack killed 3 health officers and injured 4 YBŞ fighters in the hospital, which was destroyed completely.

**December 7, 2021:** Shengal Autonomous Administration Executive Council Co-Chair Merwan Bedel Xwedêda (Dijwar) was martyred in a Turkish drone attack in Khanasor, and two of his children in the vehicle were injured.

**December 11, 2021:** Turkish fighter jets bombed the Khanasor People's Assembly building in Shengal. The building was destroyed completely.

**January 21, 2022:** YBŞ Commander Azad Êzdîn (Sileman Şemo Yusuf) and YBŞ fighter Enver Tolhildan (Naci Heci Sebro) were martyred in a Turkish drone attack in Shengal.

**February 1, 2022:** Shengal was also targeted during a large-scale Turkish air strike campaign against the Medya Defence Zones at night.

**June 15, 2022:** Xidir Şivan Naso and 12-year-old Selah Naso were martyred, and 8 other people were injured as a result of the explosion of a bomb placed in the People's Assembly building in the Sinûnê district of Shengal.

**May 2, 2022:** Following the order of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Iraqi army forces attacked Shengal Public Security Centre and the Digurê village of Sinûn. As a result of the resistance of YBŞ and YJŞ fighters and Shengal Asayish forces, the Iraqi army had to withdraw. YBŞ member Şervan Êzîdxan and YJŞ member Feraşîn Şengalî were martyred.

**August 29, 2022:** Turkish drones bombed a vehicle on the move between Khanasor and Barê village. The attack killed 2 YBŞ fighters and injured two others.

**September 11, 2022:** A vehicle of the YBŞ was attacked by Turkish drones in the Behrewa Village of Khanasor. The attack did not result in casualties or injuries.

**September 26, 2022:** The district of Til Ezer was attacked by Turkish fighter jets.

**November 6, 2022:** The Turkish army carried out an air strike against the Serdesht Camp.

**October 28, 2022:** A civilian vehicle was attacked by Turkish drones near the city centre of Jidal. The attack did not result in casualties or injuries.

**October 29, 2022:** A house in the Khanasor district was bombed. The attack did not result in casualties or injuries.



**November 1, 2022:** The Hesin Meman Dome, one of the holy places of the Yazidi people, was bombed.

**November 3, 2022:** The Turkish state bombed a vehicle in the historical al-Nasır neighborhood of Shengal which witnessed an 11-month resistance by HPG guerrillas and YBŞ fighters against ISIS. A civilian from Shengal named Mihsen Şemo was martyred in the attack.

**February 27, 2023:** Turkish drones targeted a vehicle in Shengal, killing YBŞ commanders Pîr Çeko (Seed Elî Bedel) and Agir Cefri (Xeyrî Xidir Xelef) and injuring another fighter.

**March 1, 2023:** The invading Turkish state targeted a vehicle of the Êzîdxan Asayîş in Shengal downtown around noon. Êzîdxan Asayîş Executive Member Şêzad Şemo Qasim was martyred.

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## MXDŞ calls on international community and Baghdad to stand against Turkish attacks in Shengal

ANF | SHENGAL | 3 MARCH 2023

In just a few days, Turkey has attacked the Shengal region twice. Two commanders of the YBŞ resistance units, Pîr Çeko and Agir Cefrî, were killed in a drone strike on Monday. Şêzad Şemo Qasim from the security forces Asayîşa Êzdîxanê died on Wednesday – also as a result of an airstrike. Both the YBŞ and Asayîşa Êzdîxanê, were founded as a result of the genocide committed by the Islamic State against the Yazidi community of Shengal in 2014. Many are survivors of this genocide.

The two attacks are only the latest in a whole series of illegal attacks by Turkey against Shengal. However, as in other parts of Iraq and in the autonomously administered regions of Syria, the use of Turkish drones and warplanes in the core area of the Yazidis has been going on for years and is ignored by western international opinion and especially by close Turkish partner, Germany. The international community has at least a moral duty to take a stand against and prevent Turkish aggression.

### State terror against survivors of a genocide

“As a NATO member, Turkey is waging a drone war against the Kurdish population and terrorizing survivors of a genocide,” the Shengal Democratic Autonomous Council (MXDŞ) said in a statement. The most recent attacks were only the new escalation phase of an already ongoing campaign of extermination by the leadership in Ankara against Êzdîxan (land of the Yazidis), which the committee believes is a continuation of the genocide of 2014. “Pîr Çeko, Agir Cefrî and Şêzad Şemo were three members of our security and self-defense forces who have been protecting the existence of our people, our faith and our homeland since the genocide. Turkey deliberately murdered them. The intention behind this is clear: The Turkish state wants to deprive the Yazidi people of their protective shields in order to complete the ISIS genocide.”

## Silence is “unacceptable and inhuman”

The fact that Turkey's war crimes did not provoke any public outcry - neither in the central government of Iraq nor in the western world - is “unacceptable and inhuman”, according to the MXDŞ. After all, these attacks are contrary to international law, it adds, “but Turkey is showing with its bombs on Shengal that it can act in Iraq at any time as it sees fit without fearing the consequences. We as MXDŞ had hoped that the new government elected in Baghdad in October would implement a paradigm shift and meet our desire for the Yazidi population’s right to self-determination and self-government to be recognized within the Iraqi federal state. But the deafening silence in Baghdad leads us to conclude that we were wrong in our hopes of the new government.”

## Attacks on Iraqi territory

In its attacks on Shengal, Turkey is cooperating with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the party in government in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. “However, the bombings are taking place on Iraqi territory, and Shengal is also within the area of action and responsibility of the Iraqi central government. Baghdad has an obligation to take action to prevent these crimes,” the MXDŞ stressed.

## Formalize Shengal’s existing autonomy in Iraq

The so-called Shengal agreement, signed in October 2020 between Baghdad and the southern Kurdish leadership in Hewlêr (Erbil) under pressure from Turkey, is being rejected by Shengal’s autonomous administration, Yazidi civil society and large sections of the population. The central point of criticism is that the deal was made over the heads of the Yazidi community, without consulting the residents, and the real goal behind this agreement is in fact the division of control over the region between the KDP and thus Ankara and Baghdad. The MXDŞ, which has ruled Shengal since the ISIS genocide in August 2014 on the principle of self-government administration, and the security and defense forces YBŞ and Asayîşa Êzdîxanê are to be dismantled or disarmed according to the agreement. There were protests and resistance in various forms, which have so far made it impossible to enforce the agreement. The Yazidi people demand its right to self-determination and thus political and administrative co-determination be recognized and that Shengal's existing autonomy in Iraq be formalised.

## The security situation in Iraq is changing

The MXDŞ said: “We also point out to Baghdad that Turkey’s aggression not only threatens the existence of the community of Shengal, but also greatly changes the security situation in Iraq. With their attacks, Turkey and the KDP are provoking a large wave of displacement in order to further promote the depopulation of the region. Stability and security in Iraq are more important to us than any other party. The security and stability of Shengal and Baghdad are intertwined. The Turkish state and the KDP know that Shengal has been the safest place in the country since its victory over ISIS. We state unequivocally that the presence of our Autonomous Administration and Defense Forces enhances Iraq's unity and security. For this reason, the Iraqi government should treat any attack on Shengal as an attack on Baghdad and act accordingly.” The MXDŞ called on the international community, and in particular to those states that recognized the 2014 massacre as a genocide, to take a stand against Turkey and to stand by the Yazidi people in solidarity.



## HPG reports Turkish air strikes on guerrilla areas

ANF | BEHDINAN | 3 MARCH 2023

The press centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) reported that the Turkish air force has carried out numerous air strikes against the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) in the past 24 hours.

“The Turkish occupying army continues to attack our forces with all means of warfare at its disposal,” said the HPG statement, according to which, Turkish warplanes carried out at least eight airstrikes on different regions of Medya Defense Zones on Thursday. The areas shelled by Turkey are the Golka area and the surroundings of the village of Şelazê in Metîna; Berdesorê and Sinînê in Xakurke; and Çemço in Zap.

The heavily contested guerrilla area of Çemço was also attacked by combat helicopters. As ground attacks by Turkish troops also continue, HPG reported fourteen bombardments with tanks, howitzers and other heavy weapons since yesterday.

Turkey's attacks came despite a ceasefire announced by the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK). The decision was taken after the devastating earthquake disaster in the Turkish-Syrian border area on 6 February. The Kurdish guerrillas, which include the HPG and the YJA Star (Free Women's Troops), are implementing the call for a cessation of all hostilities and are in a defensive position.

In a statement on February 9, the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), an umbrella organization of the Kurdish freedom movement of which the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) is also a member, called for a halt of military actions in Turkey, in metropolises and cities. “It is necessary to prevent the people from experiencing even more suffering in this affliction”, said Cemil Bayık, co-chairman of the executive council of the KCK.

The Central Headquarters of the People's Defence Forces (HSM) expressed support for the KCK's call and said on February 11 that the guerrillas were ready to do their part to alleviate the suffering of people.



## Turkish military operations continue in Yüksekova

ANF | HAKKARI | 4 MARCH 2023

A new operation is carried out every day by the Turkish troops at Yüksekova District Gendarmerie Command in many villages and hamlets in Esendere town, in Yüksekova district of Hakkari.

During the past week, military operations have been launched in the villages of Şişemzîn, Xurekan'a Seyida, Xurekan'a Temo and Astenga Reş. The campaign then spread to the villages of Dirbêsan and Dotkan, respectively, according to the Mezopotamya news agency (MA).

Four days ago, the village of Qesran in Esendere was besieged by the Turkish army, after which more troops were deployed to the village, located on the border with East Kurdistan, and an operation was launched.

MA reported that an armored military vehicle was stationed in front of each house in the village of Qesran, which is home to only two families and which was declared a "special security area" 7 years ago.

The military operations intensified in the Mêvan Ava, Dola Gota, Çiyayê Kotol, Çilika Xirabe and Kora Çalê areas of the village.

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## KHRO says 13 Kurds executed and 16 kolbars killed in Rojhilat in February

ANF | 5 MARCH 2023

The Kurdistan Human Rights Organization (KHRO) announced the balance sheet of human rights violations in Rojhilat (East Kurdistan) for the month of February.

The statement said that 13 Kurdish citizens were executed, 82 people were arrested and 12 people were imprisoned in February. Noting that there were at least 5 children and 5 women among those arrested, the KHRO added that 3 women were sentenced to prison.

The statement said: "While 3 kolbars died in traffic accidents in February, 12 kolbars were injured and one was killed as a result of direct fire by the Iranian regime forces. In addition, at least 3 women and 5 men committed suicide last month, while 2 women were killed. Furthermore, 4 people lost their lives as a result of a mine explosion, while 4 people lost their lives as a result of the direct fire opened by the Iranian regime. One prisoner was killed because he was not given medical treatment."

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## Citizens of Manbij: Cutting off Euphrates water aims to decimate people

ANF | MANBIJ | 6 MARCH 2023

The invading Turkish state, encouraged by international silence, is waging a water war, imposing an embargo on millions of people in North and East Syria.

Speaking to ANHA, a citizen named Zilîxa İbrahim from Manbij said that the invading Turkish state purposely pursues vicious policies against the peoples of North and East Syria by cutting off the water from the Euphrates River.

İbrahim noted that the Turkish state is uttering threats and mounting constant attacks against the region and annexing Syrian lands to its territory. She said: “The most dangerous policy is to cut off the water of the Euphrates, because water cut leads to power blackouts and agriculture also needs water.”

İbrahim pointed out that the invading Turkish state is trying to forcibly displace the citizens of the region, cause chaos and commit genocide against the peoples who seek freedom. She added: “Everyone is aware of the policies of the invading Turkish state. Our people are aware of all the attempts, plots and schemes of the fascist Turkish state. Our will cannot be broken. We will stand against all planned policies hostile to North and East Syria.”

İbrahim called on humanitarian and legal organizations to fulfil their responsibilities to stop the invading Turkish state's violations against the people of North and East Syria.

Another citizen named İsa El Elî, from the Sendeliyê village of Manbij, said that the continuation of water cut would bring about a major disaster to the region.

El Elî said: “The most dangerous problem was that some parts of the dam cracked due to the decrease in water. The dam management has resolved this problem.”

El Elî stated that they could hardly obtain drinking water due to the low water level of the Euphrates. He continued: “While the water depth in the wells used to be between 85 and 100 meters, it has now decreased to 120 meters. Now, we are in the spring. I wonder what will happen during the summer season. Cutting off the water of the Euphrates will spark a major disaster for the Syrian people.”

El Elî pointed out that the agriculture in the region was seriously affected by the water cuts. He remarked: “In particular, the production of wheat, a strategic product in the region, was damaged. It's not raining, and temperatures have risen, so wheat would need more watering.”

El Elî urged international humanitarian organizations to put pressure on the invading Turkish state to stop its water war against the people of North and East Syria.

# Earthquake in Kurdistan

## 25 journalists killed, 14 attacked, 4 detained in earthquake

ANF | AMED | 26 FEBRUARY 2023

The Dicle Fırat Journalists' Association (DFG) released its report on the violation of the rights of media workers and the violation of press freedom following the earthquakes in south-eastern Turkey and north-western Syria. According to the DFG, an inconceivable new climax in the gagging of critical media is taking place in Turkey these days.

The Amed (tr. Diyarbakır) based organisation is outraged that even after a disaster like the 6 February series of earthquakes, the Turkish authorities continue their "war on the free press" and alarmingly deteriorate the working conditions of media professionals. The accusations against the government range from intimidation and harassment to physical violence, arrests and arbitrary investigations, to digital persecution aimed at preventing critical reporting on the state's failures in the aftermath of the earthquakes.

According to official figures, more than 50,000 people were killed by the severe tremors in the Turkish-Syrian border region almost three weeks ago, more than 44,000 in Turkey alone. Among them were at least 25 media workers, DFG said in its report, naming them as Burak Alkuş, Hidayet Özdemir, İskender Korkut, Kemal Öner, Muhammed Akan, Ruhi Akan, Yunus Emre Doğan, Zübeyir Pektaş, İsmail Hakkı Koçak, Fatih Bayın, Barış Can Tabakçı (died in Adıyaman); Ayşe Figen Arlı, Burak Milli, Gökhan Aklan, İzzet Nazlı, Neşet Alkan, Erhan Yılmaz, Mehmet Tekin, Hasan Seid Okay, Berkay Akay (died in Hatay); Mustafa Yüzbaşıoğlu, Aziz Çevlik, Fatih Nalbantbaşı (died in Maraş); Meltem Özgen (died in Adana) and Fatma Erdoğan (died in Antep). "Our colleagues would still be alive if compliance with building regulations had been enforced instead of profiteering by disregarding safety standards, and if state aid had arrived in time after the earthquakes," the report stressed.

Pointing to numerous and alarming violations of press freedom and human rights violations that are legitimised by means of an emergency decree, DFG stated: "Four media workers were detained on the pretext of not having official press cards or being guilty of 'inciting hatred' and 'spreading false or misleading news'. Violent assaults were recorded in 14 cases, both by state officials and private individuals. At least 19 times we documented that free reporting was deliberately prevented. Investigations were initiated against six colleagues because they are suspected of having 'defamed' the police or the state. Penalties were imposed on three opposition TV stations for their critical reporting after the massive earthquake. In addition, the Turkish Information Technology Authority blocked access to a total of 340 websites without further justification, following a decision by the 4th Heavy Penal Court in Ankara. Affected by this censorship measure are various YouTube channels and Twitter accounts as well as the internet presence of media institutions, including Xwebûn, the only Kurdish newspaper in Turkey, and the women's news agency NûJINHA. As DFG, we emphasise that our commitment to press freedom cannot be stopped. No matter how difficult the obstacles are that are put in our way, we are committed to the truth and will not give up the search for it."



## Istanbul police attack demonstration against government's response to earthquake

ANF | ISTANBUL | 26 FEBRUARY 2023

In Istanbul, a planned rally by the Crisis Coordination of the Alliance for Labour, Peace and Democracy against the Turkish government's response to the earthquake disaster was violently prevented by police. The initiative reported numerous detentions, while it was unclear how many people were taken into custody. "For years, this regime has been reacting almost reflexively to protests against the political, social and economic grievances in the country," said HDP MP Musa Piroğlu, criticising the police action and demanding the release of all those detained.

"It is not the earthquake, but a corrupt and profit-oriented order that is to blame for the death of the people" was roughly the motto of the meeting that was to take place at the harbour in the district of Kadıköy to issue a public press statement. The police were deployed with a large contingent and practically sealed off all entrances. However, most of the members of the crisis coordination managed to get to Khalkedon Square, where the police encircled the participants at several points. Demonstrators responded by chanting "Government, resign!"

Almost three weeks have passed since the severe series of earthquakes in the border region between Turkey and Syria. Over 50,000 deaths have been confirmed in both countries since then, with more than 44,000 reported by the Turkish authorities alone. Entire cities have been devastated beyond recognition, millions of people are left with nothing. Antakya, for example, the capital of the particularly affected province of Hatay, practically no longer exists. Helpers are still pulling bodies out from under the rubble. It is the deadliest disaster in the history of modern Turkey, a country that has experience with major quakes.

"This makes the state's failure even more glaring, because prevention through disaster prevention, for example, and earthquake-proof urban planning would have been possible," said Piroğlu on the sidelines, who was accompanied by his parliamentary group colleague Oya Ersoy. "The extent of the destruction after the quakes is therefore a direct consequence of the patronage politics of Erdogan's AKP party, which is mired in a quagmire of corruption and nepotism, he said. "Negligence and failures of the state and the incompetence of the AKP have contributed to the fact that we have lost so many people. They were not only buried under the irresponsibility of this state - many additionally froze to death. We know of several hundred cases in Adıyaman alone where people froze to death in the cold because no state help arrived." According to Piroğlu, the HDP assumes up to 100,000 earthquake deaths in Turkey.



## One family in Adiyaman lost 35 relatives in the earthquake

ANF | ADIYAMAN | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

Şeyhmus Filikî and his close relative, Ali Dere, talked to ANF about the disaster they experienced.

Şeyhmus Filikî said that he was in Amed at the time of the earthquake, but received information that search and rescue efforts and aid arrived late. Filikî stated that thousands of buildings were destroyed in Adiyaman (Semsûr).

According to what his relatives told him, the people acted using their own means for 3-4 days, Filikî said, and added: “Currently, we can’t think of anything and we don’t have a plan for what to do next. Our sadness, pain, and uncertainty are mingled with each other. We could not even mourn in our hearts because of the current process. 35 people from our family died. Gradually, we dug our bodies out of the rubble and buried them. Of course, we know that we still have people under the rubble.”

Stating that they were asleep at the time of the earthquake and that the walls collapsed on them, Ali Dere said: “We hugged each other and couldn't go out. The electricity was gone and it was raining. We pulled people out of the rubble with our own means. We did not see any search and rescue work. For two days, the people worked on the wrecks with whatever they had. We pulled two bodies out of the rubble. We saved 6-7 people. A total of 30-40 people died in that building. They took out half of the bodies, but the other half is still under the rubble.”



## Earthquake in Malatya leaves buildings collapsed, resulting in casualties

ANF | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

After a series of devastating earthquakes in recent weeks, another quake struck the Malatya province on Monday. The earthquake, the epicenter of which was in the district of Yeşilyurt, was also felt in the surrounding regions.

The Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute said that the magnitude of the earthquake was 5.5. The intensity of the earthquake was also felt in the surrounding cities.

The Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) reported that the earthquake occurred at a depth of 6.96 kilometers at 12:04 local time.

According to initial reports, 29 buildings collapsed as a result of the earthquake, which killed one person and injured 69 others. Search and rescue efforts have been initiated in 7 of the affected buildings.



In the series of earthquakes in the Turkish-Syrian border region, which has been going on for three weeks, more than 50,000 deaths have been recorded in both states, and the number of unreported cases is believed to be much higher. In Malatya alone, about 2,300 people have died. AFAD reported more than 10,000 aftershocks.

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## Farmer in Antakya: Earthquake destroyed my years-long labour in a blink

ZEYNEP KURAY | HATAY | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

After the devastating earthquake on February 6, the two-storey house of farmer Mehmet Görüroğlu, located on a fault line in the Güzelburç neighbourhood of Hatay's Antakya district, was damaged and his field was split into two. Görüroğlu first stayed in his car for days with his wife, and now is residing in a tent because he does not want to leave his house and field. Speaking to ANF, he said: "My 40 years of labour was destroyed in the blink of an eye."

### 'It was like a horror movie'

Görüroğlu stated that he was awake when the earthquake occurred. "As we were about to perform morning prayer, we were putting water on the stove. I don't know what would have happened if I had not been awake. It was very difficult for us to get out of the house because we were shaking. Once my wife and I managed to go outside, we were surprised by what we saw. The earth was split open. It was like a horror movie."

### 'Neither the state nor AFAD came to help!'

The farmer said that the asphalt of the highway connecting Reyhanlı to Iskenderun was also split. Görüroğlu added that almost all the cars fell into the cracks and many people were injured. He noted that no one came to their aid for days. "Neither the state nor AFAD came to help us for days. We slept in the car for days. Our feet were frozen and swollen."

### 'Even if we die, we cannot leave here!'

Görüroğlu's field on the fault line was split in half and the soil became uncultivable. The farmer said: "We planted lettuce. However, the land will yield nothing this year. My 40 years of labour was destroyed in the blink of an eye. We worked for at least 30 years to build this house. We lost everything."

Görüroğlu noted that his family could receive a tent only two weeks after the earthquake. He added: "I cannot leave my house and field. We have nowhere to go, everything is here. Even if we die, we can't leave this place. We need a lot of money to rebuild this place. We can't afford it. We ask for help from the state, we want them to take care of us."



## Lawyer Demir: Policy of impunity promotes attacks

ANF | VAN | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

Racist attacks and lynching against locals and foreign nationals were reported after the looting incidents in the aftermath of the Maraş-centred earthquake on 6 February. Moreover, law enforcement officers are reported to have tortured many people on the grounds of looting. Ahmet Güreşçi, who was taken into custody for alleged looting in Hatay, died in a gendarmerie station where he was taken to. An autopsy report revealed that Güreşçi had a broken nose and suffered from a cerebral haemorrhage. It also came out that his brother Sabri Güreşçi, detained alongside him, had marks of battery on his ribs, hands and feet.

Lawyer Cemal Demir spoke to ANF about the increase in racist attacks, impunity policies, the torture and ill-treatment practices of law enforcement officers following the earthquake.

Demir said that they witnessed hysterical murders, lynching, torture and ill-treatment in many places following the provocation of some irresponsible and racist circles in earthquake-hit areas.

### No one has legal security

Demir said: “Moreover, torture and ill-treatment are perpetrated by disregarding the laws. We know that the “policy of impunity” promotes these acts. It is known that the judiciary is reluctant and even has a protective approach concerning crimes committed by security forces. Furthermore, it is known that the minister who commands the law enforcement has already made statements that disregard the laws and encourage torture and ill-treatment. However, under the current laws, no civil servant is allowed to carry out an order that is against the law. This issue is also regulated by the constitution. During this great disaster, crimes were committed openly and monstrously based on allegations of “looting and theft”. People were killed and subjected to various forms of persecution. Most particularly, discrimination and xenophobia have been encouraged and lynching squads have been formed. There is no legal security for anyone, especially for foreign nationals.”

### Government takes advantage of earthquake disaster

Demir continued: “Actually, it is known that the current government has maintained its power by relying on the policies of nationalism and racism in recent years. The government has even attempted to take advantage of the earthquake disaster. It is obvious how politically immoral it is to fuel xenophobia through this great catastrophe.”

### Perpetrators should be found

Demir remarked that the public prosecutor’s office should ex officio initiate an investigation immediately and determine the perpetrators of these crimes. “If a state claims to be a state of law, it must first adhere to the rules of the country. The judiciary should step into action against these perpetrators without delay.”

## The state collapse and crises

Demir concluded: “Although it is known that the country is on earthquake fault lines and there have been many devastating earthquakes, the ruling powers of the country have not taken effective measures so far, and they have maximized this destruction with the zoning regulations based on corruption and bribery. Even after the earthquakes, victims have been left without timely and adequate interventions. We have seen this after every earthquake disaster. After the latest earthquake disaster, we have seen a state collapse and crisis. As there was no effective state intervention on time, people, civil society and international groups were almost prevented from providing aid. Aid efforts of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) were blocked, and their aid convoys were confiscated by the state. Even trustees were appointed to crisis desks. As the entire society, we have witnessed all this with great sadness.”



## Buildings in danger of collapsing are declared “habitable”

ANF | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

22 days have passed since the earthquake with its epicentre in the district of Elbistan in Maraş province. Many houses are still buried, and the smell of corpses is coming from the rubble. Meanwhile, the Turkish government is assessing the damage. Many people are angry because their badly damaged buildings are declared “habitable”. People are afraid that their houses may collapse. Just how great this danger is is shown by the fact that only on Sunday the earth shook again in Elbistan with a magnitude of 4.3.

### “The ground no longer supports the building”

The house of Bayram Dağ, who has been working in the construction industry for years, was also classified as slightly damaged. Dağ told the Mezopotamya news agency that such an assessment cannot be made without taking cores, and said: “Our house was classified as ‘slightly damaged’. The cracks are getting bigger due to the aftershocks. I check the building every day. In the next six to seven months, the cracks will widen. The ground no longer supports the building. It is reported as slightly damaged because the load-bearing parts are still strong, but the ground under the building has shifted. Two large buildings next to it have already collapsed. This building is still standing and holding because the supporting parts are still anchored. But at the slightest movement, the foundation will shift and there will be deaths. Are people supposed to die here? Without taking drill cores, you cannot seriously say that the building is slightly damaged. The wall may only be slightly damaged, but you have to see what it looks like under the foundation.”

### “If there is another quake, we will be buried under rubble”

Hatice Günay lives on the ground floor of a building also classified as “slightly damaged”. Günay stated that the inspection teams had to break the window and enter the house that way, because the door could not be opened due to the pressure caused by the damaged attic. Günay no longer goes into her damaged

house out of fear. Regarding the work of the inspection teams, she said: "They just hit it with a hammer and say: 'The house is stable'. If the house is stable, why did this happen? The lower floor carries all the load. If the lower floor collapses, everything is over and gone. We live here with three people. If there is a second earthquake, we will be buried underneath."

### **"Let them live here themselves"**

Almost all the walls in Günay's house have cracks. Cracks can also be seen on the ceiling. Nevertheless, the house was classified as "slightly damaged". Hatice Günay said: "If it is only slightly damaged, let them come and live here themselves. Would you live in this house? We have to take care of ourselves, we have no income, and my husband is sick. They say, 'It is slightly damaged. You can move the furniture to the middle and repair the walls.' How am I supposed to move the things and fix them in this mess? They are all broken and spilled. We are left with nothing."



## 322 unaccompanied children who survived earthquake still under treatment in hospital

ANF | 28 FEBRUARY 2023

The Ministry of Family and Social Services posted a statement on social media about the unaccompanied children who were pulled out of the rubble after the two earthquakes that occurred on 6 February.

The statement said that there were 1,902 unaccompanied children who were saved from the rubble, and added that 1,476 of them were handed over to their families after the identity check and verification of the applicants.

The ministry further said that 104 children were put into institutional care after their treatment, while 322 children continue to be treated in hospital.

The statement also added that the identities of 1,820 children had been determined while 82 children have yet to be identified.



## ‘Censorship Law’: 2 journalists arrested in Osmaniye

ANF | OSMANIYE | 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Journalist Ali Imat, the manager of the Happy City Osmaniye website in Osmaniye, and his brother, journalist Ibrahim Imat, were detained on the grounds of their social media posts in which they wrote that the tents that came to help the earthquake victims were not promptly delivered.

The Imat brothers, who were brought to Osmaniye Courthouse, were referred to the prosecutor with the allegation of “spreading misleading information publicly” and with a request for arrest, as allowed by the so called “Censorship Law” recently passed.

Ali and Ibrahim Imat were indeed arrested by the Criminal Judgeship of Peace.

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## AKP blocks and seizes earthquake aid in Ağrı

ANF | AĞRI | 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Government officials have blocked earthquake aid in Agri province, arguing that aid should be provided through their logo and the notorious Islamist organisation Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH). The HDP (Peoples’ Democratic Party) Patnos Municipality Co-Mayor Müşerref Geçer and HDP Ağrı provincial executive Cemal Akar spoke to ANF about the government blocking in Ağrı.

### **Gecer: Our aid blocked since the beginning**

Geçer said: “As Patnos Municipality, we launched a campaign in the aftermath of the earthquake, but we have seen our vehicles stopped, and our aid supplies confiscated for some reasons from the very beginning. They blocked our aid materials for lame excuses. Law enforcement officers told us that “aid can only be provided through AFAD”. There have been many other obstructions. Their aim is to prevent social unity and solidarity. This is a political attitude.”

### **‘They are uncomfortable with social solidarity’**

Geçer continued: “We visited families who came from the earthquake-hit cities, and we are doing our best for them. Almost 20-25 earthquake survivor families came to Patnos. We are running a campaign to meet the needs of female survivors only. We are organizing aid campaigns through social solidarity and the unity of women. We went to Adıyaman. We saw social solidarity there. HDP people actively participated in the aid efforts. We went to villages and neighbourhoods where tents were not provided in the first days. Our municipality sent a rescue team consisting of 25 people to the region. There was neither the governor nor the mayor there. Our organized campaign disturbed them. There was great support from our people,

whom we thank once again. We are organising a campaign to mark March 8, and we call on all our women and people to show solidarity with the campaign.”

### ‘IHH seized the aid from us’

HDP Ağrı provincial executive Cemal Akar said that the pro-government IHH blocked the citizens who brought aid materials to the HDP and seized them. Akar noted that they formed a coordination committee with HDP headquarters on the morning of the earthquake. “We started to work to eliminate the food and water shortage in the earthquake area. Our patriotic friends delivered a large amount of aid. The aid trucks organized by our Patnos Municipality were blocked. We have made statements on this subject. The Kurdish people have a strong sense of solidarity, they have provided serious assistance and we have made great efforts to deliver aid materials to the earthquake area. We delivered 15 trucks of aids to Ağrı. We were recently informed that there was a need for heating stoves, and we sent them as well. Moreover, some earthquake survivors came to Agri. We have 15 fully furnished houses now. As soon as more families arrive, we will settle them there. We have the means to meet the needs of the earthquake victims here for one year. We, as the HDP’s provincial organization and the people of Ağrı, will stand by our citizens hit by the earthquakes to the end. However, we encounter obstacles as we offer help. The government’s aim is to put their own logo on the aid materials. It is disturbing to see the government behaving this way at the time of such a disaster. There were serious obstacles, our friends who wanted to deliver aid to us were blocked and they were asked “Why are you taking these supplies to the HDP?”. They confiscated the aid materials that were coming to us. Whatever they do, our pain is common, our solidarity is common.”

### ‘Citizens providing aid were blocked’

Remarking that the IHH wanted to monopolize the aid campaign in Agri, Akar said: “We announced this campaign on the social media. They stopped the citizens who brought aid to us and told them ‘There is a government decision, and the aid will be delivered through AFAD’. They try to exploit our people’s sense of charity and philanthropy. People should choose the organizations that they want to help. Our aid efforts are transparent. Our coordination centre is working quite openly. The government wants everything to be done by its own agencies.”

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## Lawyers’ organisations press charges against Erdogan and ministers

ANF | ISTANBUL | 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Lawyers’ organisations have filed a criminal complaint at the Istanbul Palace of Justice in Çağlayan against President Tayyip Erdogan and the responsible ministers for not fulfilling their duties before and after the earthquake. In front of the courthouse, a joint statement was read out by Esra Bilen, co-chair of the Istanbul Bar Association (ÖHD). In front of a banner reading “Not an earthquake, but a massacre”, Bilen

stated that although the earthquake is considered a natural disaster, it degenerated into a massacre due to negligence.

Bilen pointed out that all provinces that were severely damaged by the earthquake were previously known as earthquake zones. Despite this, she said, non-resistant and illegal buildings were erected on unsuitable land.

### “Premeditated murder”

Many public buildings, schools, hospitals, student dormitories, bridges, railways, highways and electricity and water supply infrastructure were damaged in the earthquake, Esra Bilen said, adding: “People were left under the rubble of these buildings. The serious damage to public buildings constructed by the state is mainly due to the improper selection of the building ground or the failure to construct a structure suitable for the building ground, as well as the violation of the relevant legislation. It must be clearly stated that any loss of life due to this situation is premeditated murder.”

### Criminal charges against all those responsible

Bilen stated: “Criminal charges will therefore be filed with the Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office against the President, the relevant ministers and all those responsible for intentional homicide and injury combined with negligence and dereliction of duty. The charges will be filed against the President of the Republic and all ministers, the governors, mayors and trustees in the earthquake zones; the contractors who built the collapsed buildings; the architects and engineers who worked out these construction projects; the control engineers who issued construction permits; officials of the construction supervision authorities, in short: all suspects whom we have identified and whom the prosecution must investigate ex officio.”



## Police take many members of People’s Houses into custody

ANF | HATAY | 1 MARCH 2023

Hatay Governorate ordered to remove the solidarity point established in the Defne, in the province of Hatay, since the first day of the earthquake. Deputy Governor Harun Kaya and AFAD teams, who went to the aid area where many organizations such as People’s Houses, the Workers’ Party of Turkey (TIP) and the Turkish Medical Association voluntarily provide shelter, food and health services, demanded that the tents in the “Love Park” be removed.

Members of the People’s Houses wanted to make a statement about what happened in the ‘Love Park’. They said: “Take measures to provide people with their basic needs. Do not prevent solidarity.”

Turkish police, who attacked the people making the statement, took many members of the People’s Houses into custody, including its president, Nebiye Merttürk.



## 8 detained in police attack on demo against crackdown on NGOs after earthquake

ANF | ISTANBUL | 1 MARCH 2023

The police attacked members of the Halkevleri (People's Houses) who gathered in Istanbul on Wednesday to make a press statement in protest at the police crackdown on the solidarity networks established by non-governmental organizations in the earthquake-hit cities.

The police detained eight activists after a violent intervention and prevented journalists from covering the crackdown.



## Kurdish Alevi village in Adiyaman receives no aid from government

ANF | ADIYAMAN | 1 MARCH 2023

Karaağaç, a Kurdish Alevi village in Adiyaman, has received no support from state-run relief organizations since the first day of the earthquake. Even those trapped under the rubble were pulled by the residents themselves. Tobacco planting and stock farming, the main sources of income in the village, have been interrupted by the earthquake. Tobacco crops and animals remained under the rubble. What people could hardly save is either wasted or already unusable.

The villagers desperately need tents to protect their animals and the tobacco they have saved. They say that they have repeatedly expressed their demands, but have not been offered any permanent solution.

Mehmet Taner lost his 22-year-old son in the first earthquake on the morning of 6 February. Taner said that 4 members of his family were staying in the same room, and they ran outside when the earthquake hit the village, leaving their house collapsed.

### Everything happened in 5 minutes

“At that moment, we couldn't even make a sound. We survived, but my 22-year-old son died. It didn't even take 5 minutes for our house to collapse and my son to die. The villagers stayed in tobacco tents for 2-3 nights. Now, it is the state that should provide help, because our relatives died, and our property was destroyed. People from all over Turkey are helping us.”



## Only civilian organizations delivered aid

Another villager, Hasan Cömert, said that the earthquake occurred while people were sleeping in their houses. He added: “We went outside and started shouting. We rescued some villagers. We could not enter our houses. It started to rain and snow. Then a second earthquake hit the village which was worse than the first one. In fact, the second earthquake brought more destruction. We have survived with our own efforts. People are still outside. They cannot enter their houses. Recently, a rescue team came and told us not to enter the houses for the next 15 days. They should provide us with food, clothing and tents for shelter. All the aid we received was provided by civilian relief organizations. We have not seen any state-run organizations.”

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## Sevgi Park in Hatay evacuated by police

ANF | HATAY | 3 MARCH 2023

After the 6 February earthquake that hit 11 provinces resulting in the death of more than 45 thousand people according to official figures, revolutionary organizations, unions, and civil society organizations set up tents in Sevgi Park, in the Defne district of Hatay, for earthquake victims. The tents were removed by the police.

The tents of the organizations in Sevgi Park have been targeted by the governor’s officials and the police for a week. The resistance of the people and the organizations that set up the tents prevented police from removing the solidarity tents.

The police eventually forcibly removed the tents in Sevgi Park.

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## The Forbidden Cemetery in Hatay

ANF | 3 MARCH 2023

Debris removal continues in Hatay province, which was largely devastated by two earthquakes on February 6. While many dead people are still reported to be trapped under the debris, many victims remain missing. The death toll from the earthquakes in the city is unknown. The only official statement came from Hatay Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Lütfü Savaş, who revealed on February 18 that around 20 thousand people lost their lives and at least 30 thousand damaged buildings would be demolished.

## Massive graveyard

The corpses pulled from the rubble are buried in a graveyard in the Narlıca district of Antakya. The cemetery is divided into 5 sections. There are about a thousand people buried in each section. Diggers are now digging more graves.

## Signs on grave boards

Since there are many graves with no names, and more graves are constantly being dug, families can identify the graves of their relatives from the numbers on the grave boards or personal items such as hats, clothes, scarves, and berets that they left around the boards.

## Graves marked with numbers

In the first part of the cemetery, where grave boards seem like saplings planted at regular intervals. Graves are marked with numbers from 1 to 995. Empty spray paint cans used for marking the graves can be seen. In an area next to the cemetery, there are coffins and hundreds of grave boards kept ready for new burials.

## ‘There are more cemeteries’

In other parts of the cemetery, there are funeral vehicles waiting in the wings and soldiers keeping guard. An officer prevented MA reporters from taking pictures, saying that “It is forbidden to shoot. About 5 thousand people have been buried here. We do not even know the exact number. There are more cemeteries dug in other places where thousands of people were buried. It is a very bitter situation.”



## Social Freedom Party: Our relief efforts are terrorized

ANF | ISTANBUL | 3 MARCH 2023

The Social Freedom Party (TÖP) made a statement in Istanbul expressing concern over the government crackdown and detentions against the party. TÖP spokeswoman Juliana Gözen revealed that her party’s administrators and members were frequently subjected to physical surveillance by the police, adding that the police attempted to hire party members as spies.

Remarking that TÖP is criminalized by the state, Gözen stated that her party regarded the "arrest warrant" against Perihan Koca, an executive member of the party, as a “conspiracy”. Gözen pointed out that this conspiracy was put into action to prevent their activities. “It is a crime to frame political parties by preventing their activities. The government is thus committing a crime.”

Gözen insisted that they would continue to disturb the government with their work. She said that the government targeted revolutionaries after the earthquake. Citing the police intervention against the voluntary

relief efforts in the Sevgi Park, Hatay, Gözen remarked: “Our comrades, who organized popular solidarity from village to village, were detained by the gendarmerie 3 days ago. The state, which was not in the region to help the people in the aftermath of the earthquake, is currently preventing the solidarity work organized by the revolutionaries. But the crackdown will fail.”

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## TIHV publishes report on rights violations in the earthquake zone

ANF | ISTANBUL | 3 MARCH 2023

The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) has published a report on rights violations in the earthquake region since 6 February. The 28-page report covers the period up to 27 February and includes the issues of “violations of the right to life, personal security, prisons, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of assembly and demonstration, and freedom of association and solidarity”.

According to the report, which was prepared on the basis of media reports and statements by experts and professional associations as well as other human rights organisations, the incidents “show in a worrying way that the legal perspective has been completely abandoned in order to make the truth invisible”.

TIHV points out that in the eleven provinces affected by the earthquake in Turkey, the infrastructure has collapsed: public buildings, hospitals, communication systems, power lines, roads and railway lines as well as airports have been rendered unusable and natural habitats destroyed. According to TIHV, the main factor in the scale of the natural disaster was “the failure of the authorities to meet the scientific requirements of earthquake preparedness, despite all the warnings and criticisms from experts, scientific circles and professional and non-governmental organisations”.

The report cites “serious errors, negligence, misconduct, and coordination and planning deficiencies before and after the earthquakes”. In addition, TIHV refers to a report by the Turkish Chamber of Architects and Engineers (TMMOB) and the Chamber of Civil Engineers (IMO) of 14 February. In this report, it was explained in a comprehensible way how an earthquake can become a major catastrophe by human hand.

The TIHV highlights the fact that the emergency response and search and rescue operations after the earthquake were not carried out properly and that there was disorganisation, delays, lack of coordination and planning. In this regard, it was found that “insufficient personnel and equipment were deployed in the regions. Public facilities could not be used properly and there was clearly a ‘crisis management crisis’.”

In this context, the Human Rights Foundation also comments on the statements of President Tayyip Erdogan during his visit to Adiyaman on 27 February. Erdogan had stated in the heavily damaged province that: “Unfortunately, we could not work as effectively as we would have liked in the first days in Adiyaman. We could not arrive on the first day due to the weather and road conditions. For that, I apologise for the first few days.” TIHV sees this as an “admission of a crisis management crisis with high costs”.

The executive summary of the report lists the following violations:

- At least one person died in custody due to torture and ill-treatment.
- Three detainees died in prisons as a result of the intervention of law enforcement officials.
- In nine separate cases, 17 people were tortured and ill-treated, and one person died.
- The identity of 82 of the 1902 unaccompanied children could not be established.
- Security forces and civilians intervened against 22 journalists reporting from the earthquake zone. One journalist was injured, four journalists were detained and two journalists were arrested for posting on social media. One foreign journalist was not allowed to enter the country.
- 575 people were prosecuted for their posts on social media. 141 people were detained, 27 people were arrested.
- The Turkish regulatory authority responsible for radio, television and the internet, RTÜK, imposed fines on the Halk TV, Tele 1 and FOX TV channels for their coverage of the earthquake and the search and rescue operations.
- 246 people protesting against the decision to introduce distance learning at universities after the earthquake were detained under torture and ill-treatment.
- In at least 20 cases, citizens, civil society organisations, political parties and communities were prevented from collecting relief supplies for the earthquake victims. 16 people were detained and six people were arbitrarily detained. One person was subjected to physical violence and one person was fined.
- One person was injured in an armed attack on an aid organisation.
- In at least seven cases, relief goods were confiscated by the disaster management agency AFAD, district offices and law enforcement agencies.
- 100 trucks sent by the Future Party (Gelecek Partisi) as well as 1500 tents, eight trucks and two vans with relief goods, 30 containers and 120 generators sent by the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were confiscated.

## The state is not providing any help in villages in Malatya

ANF | MALATYA | 5 MARCH 2023

Malatya is one of the Kurdish provinces where the earthquakes of 6 February caused devastating destruction. In the villages of Topraktepe in the district of Doğanşehir and Ören in the district of Akçadağ, there are no longer any permanent structures.

Topraktepe with 350 households and Ören with 850 households were almost completely destroyed. State institutions did not provide any assistance after the earthquake disaster. Water and electricity supplies are still not guaranteed, livestock is still lying under the rubble.

In the Alevi village of Topraktepe, eleven people died in the earthquake. The settlement is only one and a half kilometres away from the district of Doğanşehir, yet the AKP mayor has not visited it, say the villagers.

Ali Babur is one of the few people who continue to hold out in Topraktepe. He stated that they lived in the village for three days after the earthquake without food and water and tried to clear the rubble with their own means. “The state came after three days. They threw tents in the middle and left. People from the village who live in cities like İzmir and Istanbul helped us. There was electricity again only after 14 days. We still have no water. Thank God we have food, but we have no clothes. Eleven of us died in the village. All 350 houses were destroyed. Out of 700 inhabitants, only 130 people live here now, everyone else has left.”

Hasan Kayapınar, another villager, said that what they need most right now is a roof over their heads: “We can’t live in tents anymore. We cannot stay in the cold. We are appealing to the authorities, but we don’t know if they will hear our voice. The first earthquake was already very bad, the second one destroyed everything. For two days, we remained hungry and thirsty. The AFAD team came only after three days. There were people who needed to be rescued, but they died because the help came too late.”

The village head İrfan Barlas also criticised the lack of any rescue measures in the village, stating: “On the first day, we cleared our roads by our own means. The village was destroyed in the second earthquake. Some people were burnt to death. Since no one came to help, people who had initially survived also died. We collected the bones of those who were burnt. You can see the condition our village is in now. Even the relief goods that came to us were confiscated. The Malatya Municipality brought two packets of wafers and wished us well. On the 16th day, they came to finally see how many dead animals were lying under the rubble.”

The situation in the village of Ören in Akçadağ is no different. Eighty per cent of the houses have been destroyed. Most people have left the settlement and those who remain are mostly living in tents. Mustafa Özer, one of the villagers, said that they took shelter in cars for a few days after the earthquake because of the cold weather. He noted that help only came from volunteers and did not come from the state: “The state only started sending something much later. We mainly received help from the civilian population. Now we are thinking of moving to other towns. We can’t clear the rubble here. We have no water and no electricity. They are trying to build water pipes, but there is no life here anymore.”

Ninety-year-old Hasan Türkmenođlu from Ören remarked that his house was destroyed, and he moved to his daughter's damaged house: "My house was destroyed. I was helpless. I came to my daughter's house, and I have nowhere else to go. I have experienced three earthquakes in my life, but I have never seen an earthquake like this. This earthquake hit everything in one second."

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## Femicide

### HDP Women's Council: Activities for 8 March International Women's Day will reach earthquake regions

ANF | ISTANBUL | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

The HDP Women's Council started the program of activities related to 8 March International Women's Day with an action in Istanbul in front of Beşiktaş Pier in Kadıköy. "We are not alone, we are together!" said the women chanting the slogan "Jin jyan azadi" and kicking off the program of activities for 8 March.

Members of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Women's Council carried a banner reading "We are together" and the names of the cities where the earthquake occurred with photographs reflecting the destruction.

Peoples' Democratic Congress (HDK) co-spokesperson Esengül Demir, HDP Women's Assembly spokesperson Ayşe Acar Başaran, Democratic Regions Party (DBP) co-chair Saliha Aydeniz, Green Left Party co-spokesperson Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar, members of the Peace Mothers Council and many women attended the action in Istanbul.

HDP Women's Council spokesperson Ayşe Acar Başaran said: "We are not alone. We will stand up together with our own strength and we will be on the streets on 8 March with our organization. The whole society has been affected by this process. But, as always, we saw that women, children and other disadvantaged groups were most affected by this crisis. While trying to stand up against this disaster, on the one hand, women struggled to survive by pulling their relatives out of the rubble. On the other hand, they experienced great difficulties because the government could not solve the problem of shelter, hygiene, water, heating and food."

Başaran underlined that they will go to the earthquake region to stand in solidarity with women there on 8 March, and added: "We held the hand of our women friends, from Adıyaman to Maraş, from Antep to Hatay and from there to Malatya, and said that they are not alone. We will reiterate that we will not leave anyone at the mercy of this government. Nobody should lose hope. We will be on the field with our

strongest organization. The common struggle of women will put an end to this rotten order. Women will be at the forefront to ensure that those responsible will be held.”

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## Men kill 11 women in February

ANF | 3 MARCH 2023

According to the news compiled by bianet from local and national newspapers, news websites and news agencies, men killed at least 11 women in February.

The deaths of at least 28 women and two children were considered “suspicious.”

Men killed at least 11 women in February 2023. This time last year, men had killed 22 women . Men also killed two men who were together with the women they killed.

Men killed at least two women despite protection orders, and six women because they wanted to break up or did not want to reconcile. Men’s “excuses” for killing five women were not reported in the press.

Eight women were killed by their husbands, ex-husbands or boyfriends, one woman by her father, one by her son-in-law, and one by a friend.

Men killed seven women at home and three women in places outside of the house, such as streets, parks and workplaces.

Men killed five women with firearms and six women with sharp objects.

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## Women protest in Istanbul: “We are united in anger and rebellion”

ANF | ISTANBUL | 5 MARCH 2023

In the run-up to the International Women’s Day on 8 March, women in Istanbul demonstrated under the slogan “We have an account to settle, we have the power to build the new”. The gathering in Kadıköy, organised by the 8 March Women’s Platform based in Istanbul, was accompanied by a large police contingent. Despite police cordons, participants streamed to the ferry pier from several sides, loudly demanding the resignation of the Erdogan government. The Peace Mothers walked in the front line. Some demonstrators carried pictures of imprisoned women, such as the HDP politicians Figen Yüksekdağ and Gülten

Kışanak, and demanded “Freedom for the political prisoners”. The slogan “Jin Jiyan Azadî” (Woman, Life, Freedom) was chanted to express solidarity with the struggling women in Iran.

The 8 March Women’s Platform issued a statement in Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic. “We are united in our anger and rebellion against male and state violence, against femicide, poverty, political Islam, war, the transformation of natural events into massacres, profit-oriented politics and plunder,” the statement read in three languages.

The Women’s Alliance further stated, “The government’s war policy does not stop at an earthquake and imposes on us a life based on militarism, nationalism and sexism. The state tries to cover people’s anger about their losses with hatred towards migrants and refugees. People are called looters and murdered by the state.”

After the earthquake, it said, it became clear how vital multilingualism is in the public service. “The disaster management agency AFAD tried to communicate with those trapped in the earthquake in only one language. Those who prevent women’s diverse solidarity against monism want to subjugate women who are fighting for a free and equal world and against war. Our companions in our women’s struggle are being murdered in state-planned attacks. In prisons and police custody, torture is normalised through body searches and the release of imprisoned women is prevented through arbitrary measures. We women have not submitted and will not submit!” the statement stressed.

In conclusion, the Women’s Alliance said: “We know that those who murdered the weavers in New York on 8 March 1857 by locking them up in the factory are the same capitalist rulers who today leave people to die in earthquakes under the rubble and sell tents for the survivors. Our only guarantee against the male-dominated state that ignores our lives is our struggle, our only guarantee is our unity. Today we are here with our rebellion and anger to rebuild our places in solidarity. We women will build an equal and free life without violence and exploitation through our common struggle. We will build the new. We will defend our lives. Long live women's solidarity!”



## 19-year-old woman dies under suspicious circumstances in

### Hakkari

ANF | HAKKARI | 6 MARCH 2023

A 19-year-old woman named Zilan Turan was found shot by a firearm in her home in the village of Dizê in Hakkari (Colemêrg) on Sunday night. Turan, who allegedly committed suicide, was seriously injured. She was taken to Hakkari State Hospital.

Turan could not be saved despite all the interventions made in the hospital. An investigation has been launched into her suspicious death.





## Men killed at least 337 women in 2022

ANF | 6 MARCH 2023

According to the data compiled by bianet from the news reported in the local, national, and online press, men killed at least 337 women in 2022.

The number of women killed by men in 2022 was 327. If 14 femicides, committed in the past years, but reported in the press in 2022, are added to this number, the number becomes 341. Some of these 14 femicides had been reported in the news as “unidentified murders” or “suspicious deaths” in previous years.

In the same period (January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022), men killed 39 children, raped 32 women, forced 442 women to sex work, harassed 156 women, and abused 238 children in Turkey. Men injured 793 women.

The deaths of at least 198 women, including trans women, were reported in the news as “suspicious” in 2022.

In 2022, men attempted to kill at least 12 women and threatened 42 women with killing or inflicting violence on them.



## YJA Star: We will make the 21st century the century of women

ANF | BEHDINAN | 6 MARCH 2023

YJA Star Central Headquarters Command issued a statement to mark 8 March, International Working Women’s Day and said: “We are going through a process in which we have taken the strongest steps in our revolutionary struggle in line with the philosophy of life of ‘Jin, Jiyan Azadî’. Rêber Apo’s [Abdullah Öcalan] great free life action is a hope for all humanity, especially women, and has made women’s struggle a source of strength for society. We salute 8 March, International Working Women’s Day, with the resistance of the age, where resistance and women’s solidarity hold society together.”

The statement continued: “The earthquake disaster that took place on 6 February caused great pain to our people and brought society and human nature to the brink of collapse. As YJA Star Free Women’s Unions, we deeply feel the pain of our people, who are attached to their land with the deepest patriotic feelings, and we state that we will fulfil our historical responsibilities on the basis of building a new life. We know that our struggle for free women has the strength and faith to heal the wounds of society. As YJA Star, our women’s freedom struggle and self-defense force, which is a new life model for all women and peoples, we

salute both 8 March and our leading commanders, Raperîn Amed, Evîn Goyi, Rojbîn Dêrsîm, Peyman Bagok, Melsa Muş. We pay tribute to the martyrs united around the Jin, Jiyan, Azadi resistance.”

The statement added: “Our leader says that ‘Difficulties create great people, we are a revolutionary people’. These words show the urgency of the human revolution that we can achieve by organizing in unity. The fact that the fascist state structures are at war with humanity, and that the AKP-MHP government caused the loss of thousands of people, will go down in history as the shame of the century. The AKP-MHP government, which wants to end the organized struggle of the peoples around the philosophy of free life, continues its murderous policies against our people in order to perpetuate their fascist system. Undoubtedly, there is no other chance for a life other than a revolutionary struggle for a people who are faced with massacres and disasters. The reason for the greatest disasters in history is the male state mentality, which brings society, especially women, to the brink of collapse.”

The statement said: “Our uninterrupted struggle of resistance, led by our YJA Star forces, against the fascist Turkish state, which attacked the Kurdistan mountains and freedom guerrillas with its genocidal policies, is advancing to victory in line with the Democratic Modernity Guerrillas. As YJA Star guerrillas and Leader Apo’s self-sacrificing militants, we promise to ensure the freedom of all women, as well as the freedom of our Leader, against a murderous state mentality that attacks guerrilla positions in the face of the KCK’s decision of inaction, tries to achieve results by using chemical weapons every day, and plunders the nature of Kurdistan.”

The statement underlined that “the male-dominated system is engaged in a war against social life. Yet, the free women’s struggle continues to fulfil its historical responsibilities on the basis of building a new life. Our women’s liberation movement, which developed under the leadership of YJA Star guerrillas, salutes 8 March with the spirit of resistance against the attacks of the invading Turkish state, with the determination to make the 21st century a women’s century.

The slogan Jin, Jiyan and Azadî, is the spirit of this struggle in all four parts of Kurdistan, especially in Rojhilatê Kurdistan, in all areas where the earthquake was experienced, in all women who turned their anger into a determination to struggle, and in every individual seeking freedom.

We state that as YJA Star forces, we promised to protect the will of its people and the values of humanity in the mountains of Kurdistan, with the philosophy of life of Leader Apo. We will achieve victory for our people’s voice, women’s resistance, and a free life under all circumstances. We will win by fighting and making the 21st century the century of women.”

## KCK: We salute the resistance of all women marching towards freedom

ANF | BEHDINAN | 6 MARCH 2023

The Co-Presidency of the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) Executive Council released a statement marking March 8, International Women's Day.

The KCK statement saluting the resistance and struggle of all the women who are marching towards freedom with the slogan 'Jin, Jîyan, Azadî' [Woman, Life, Freedom] includes the following:

"We would like to congratulate the women of the world on March 8, the International Working Women's Day, which is a symbol of women's resistance and solidarity against all forms of exploitation by the male-dominated order. We salute the struggle of all women, which stands for the liberation of all humanity and nature, and wish them success. On this meaningful day, women all over the world, including the Middle East and Kurdistan, with their feelings of resistance and solidarity, will wage the most meaningful struggle for liberation in history and thus bring us closer to freedom.

All values created until today are the result of huge sacrifices, resistance and solidarity. March 8 was created and made meaningful by women's resistance and struggle. Women have always taken a stance and resisted the male-dominated order. It is this historical resistance of women that gives hope to humanity and ensures the cycle of life. Women's stance against all forms of exploitation and for the freedom of all humanity has left its mark on all history.

With the domination by the male-dominated mind over women through methods of deceit, deception and conspiracy, relations of exploitation began to enter human history. This fact can be observed concretely in history. In fact, the written and oral history of the male-dominated process tells us how women were subjugated and how the order of exploitation was established. This reality can be understood based on a reading of history that is free from the male-dominated perspective. The domination of women has also led to the domination and exploitation of the whole society and life. The desire to subjugate and exploit women, who constitute the basis for the development of life and society, has led to such a result. As the approach of domination and exploitation against women increased, the exploitation of society and the relations of domination and slavery deepened. This is another reality that history has shown us.

Another important fact that the history of humanity teaches us is that with the beginning of domination and exploitation, resistance and struggle also began and have continued until today. Women were not only the first sex, class and nation to be subjugated and exploited, but also the first sex, class and nation to develop an attitude of resistance. Women's resistance against domination and exploitation has been the main subject of all epics, folk songs, mythology and art, and has left its mark on history despite the efforts of the male-dominated system to conceal and distort it. The resistance of women, which stands for the freedom of society and nature, has been the source of all the resistances that later developed and spread. Today, women's leadership in the protection of society and the liberation of life against domination and exploitation proves this historical reality.

The system of capitalist modernity is a system that targets society the most and thus deepens exploitation. In this respect, it is the most advanced form of the male-dominated system. Because of its anti-social character, the capitalist system attacks women and women's nature so much. Since the woman stands for life, fellowship and society, the male-dominated system carries out multidimensional attacks on women in order to destroy all these feelings and society completely. The male-dominated culture, oppression, exploitation and massacres that capitalist modernity has imposed on women's nature tries to hide the misogynist reality by covering it with a false perception of freedom. This situation, which constitutes a great distortion, reflects the trickery, deception and conspiratorial reality of the male-dominated mind. Capitalist modernity is not only not libertarian, but represents the most exploitative and slavish system. March 8 has revealed this reality of capitalist modernity in its simplest form. March 8 has shown us that the overcoming of the male-dominated mind and order will only be achieved through the destruction of the capitalist system. Today, women's growing resistance based on this consciousness of rejecting and overcoming the capitalist system – the most advanced male-dominated system – is the only way to liberate life, society and humanity.

By rejecting all modern and traditional approaches, Leader Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] has endeavored to understand the nature of women and to live correctly with them. This approach and effort of Leader Apo has allowed him to develop a deep understanding of women's freedom. He has said that the emancipation of society is only possible through the emancipation of women and that life can be made meaningful in this way. Therefore, he has made great efforts for women to develop their own willpower and gain self-consciousness. Consequently, Leader Apo has defined his work and the revolution he leads as a women's revolution and has revealed his approach to women by basing his paradigm on women's freedom. This approach of Leader Apo has determined the character of the Kurdistan revolution and ensured its development in line with women's freedom. Leader Apo developed the paradigm based on women's freedom not only for Kurdish women but for all women. That is why today women all over the world are interested in his ideas, are actively struggling for his physical liberation and support him. Leader Apo has been made a target of the forces of capitalist modernity because he rejects all kinds of male-dominated approaches and life and struggles for a new life based on women's freedom. Therefore, it is very meaningful that women are taking the lead today in supporting Leader Apo. We consider these meaningful efforts of women who support Leader Apo's freedom as an expression of their own freedom to be very valuable and we salute them.

Our movement struggles according to the line of women's freedom on the basis of the paradigm put forward by Leader Apo and believes that a free and meaningful life lies in the freedom of women. Today, women, whose consciousness, will and organization have increased, have reached the level of leading the struggle for the liberation of humanity. The most concrete example of this is that women in East Kurdistan and Iran are leading the struggle for freedom, equality and democracy of the whole society. Everywhere now, society is coming together around women and sees its freedom in the freedom of women. Today, women leading social struggles show that we are very close to freedom. We believe that the woman who gains willpower, organizes and increases her struggle will make life free and abolish the order of exploitation. In a period when capitalist modernity, the most advanced form of the male-dominated system, has rendered society and nature uninhabitable and is experiencing total decay, this goal needs to be achieved today, not in some distant future.

On February 6, 2023, a huge earthquake centered in Kurdistan took place. While the Turkish state and the fascist AKP-MHP government have left the people to die, a very meaningful example of social solidar-

ity and support led by women has taken place since. This example of solidarity has once again shown that women and peoples have great potential and that they possess the power to establish their own independent and free lives and administrations.

On March 8 this year, it is very important for women to show solidarity with the earthquake zones and to pioneer and increase social solidarity. Again – and more than ever – we would like to acknowledge and salute that they are waging a struggle against the male-dominated system, its fascism and all its other versions. Once again, we would therefore like to congratulate all the women of the world on March 8, International Working Women’s Day. On this occasion we would also like to salute the resistance and struggle of all the women who are marching towards freedom with the slogan ‘Jin, Jîyan, Azadî.’”

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## YJA Star guerrillas: 8 March is a day of revival

ANF | BEHDINAN | 6 MARCH 2023

Women celebrate 8 March as a day of struggle all over the world, including in the mountains of Kurdistan. Guerrillas of the YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) explained to ANF what this day means to them.

For Viyan Avesta, 8 March is a day of revival. Pointing to the role of Abdullah Öcalan in the formation of the Kurdish women’s movement, she said: “It is important for us to renew our identity as women and to unite on the basis of Leader Öcalan’s proposals. YJA Star plays a leading role in the resistance against the Turkish occupation forces. This shows the dimension that free women have reached.”

Remarking that Kurdish women are pioneers in the liberation struggle, Viyan Avesta continued: “On 8 March and in the struggle, it becomes clear that women are the guarantee of freedom. When we see our existence in the guerrilla, we understand how great our strength and will are.”

Zilan Firat said that the fact that Kurdish women can celebrate 8 March is also thanks to Abdullah Öcalan's struggle for women’s liberation, which has been going on for over forty years. She said that YJA Star aspires to expand the struggle and defend the values created by the women’s revolution. “For me, following in the footsteps of friends like Sara, Zilan and Bêrîtan has great meaning. We want to win back what was taken from us,” she said.

Narîn Şiyar first sent greetings to Abdullah Öcalan and all the fighters in the guerrilla tunnels. Remarking that the beginning of spring on 8 March has the colours of women, she added: “Spring will be even more beautiful on 8 March. Leader Öcalan is the architect of the women’s liberation struggle, and we understand better what freedom means since we are in these free mountains. Jin Jiyan Azadî!”

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# Ecocide

## Crimes against nature continue in Afrin

ANF | 27 FEBRUARY 2023

According to ANHA information obtained from local sources in the Afrin region, the al-Hamzat mercenary group cut down 75 olive trees owned by a citizen named Seid Behri.

The felled trees were found in the terrain near the road leading to the village of Zere in Bilbil district.

The Turkish state and its mercenaries, which occupied Afrin in 2018, have turned the city into a hotbed of crimes, continuing to commit crimes including theft, kidnapping, rape, massacre, demographic change and destruction of nature in an attempt to displace the people of the region.

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## Occupation forces torture civilians and cut down 270 trees in Afrin

ANF | 1 MARCH 2023

The invading Turkish state and its mercenaries cut down 270 olive and fruit trees in the village of Meydankê in the Shera of Afrin.

According to sources from the village of Meydankê, the occupation forces cut down 270 trees owned by the locals.

The village of Meydankê is currently under the occupation of Faylaq al-Sham, Jaysh al-Nuhba, Sultan Murad and Ahrar al-Sham mercenary groups. Last year, the Sultan Murad group cut down more than 15,000 olive trees near Lake Meydankê.

According to sources from Afrin Canton, the Faylaq al-Sham group inflicted violence on a woman and her husband in the Birç Heyder village of the Sherawa district.

Hundreds of people have been murdered and hundreds of thousands of others have been displaced in Afrin since it was occupied by the Turkish state and allied mercenary jihadists in March 2018 in violation of international law. Nearly 500 thousand foreigners and families of mercenaries have been settled in the city in their place.



## Qamishlo Women's Economy Committee plants 3,800 fruit trees in Derik

ANF | DERIK | 2 MARCH 2023

Within the scope of the 'Jiyan' project promoted by the Qamishlo Women's Economy Committee, 3,800 fruit trees were planted in Derik.

The "Jiyan" project was launched by Rojava Ecological Women's Platform to protect the environment. The project is carried out with the slogan 'We will reach the forests against chemical weapons that try to turn the country into a desert and an earthquake zone'.

Many members of the Qamishlo Women's Economic Committee planted 3,800 fruit trees. In this context, trees such as grapes, figs, mangoes and olives were planted in the village of Melamerze, east of Derik.

Meyasa Faruq, member of the Women's Economic Committee, saluted all women on 8 March and said that they tried to increase the green space in the region by planting these trees.

The tree planted area consists of 120 decares. Tree planting is expected to continue until 4 April, the birthday of Leader Abdullah Öcalan.



## More olive trees cut down by mercenary groups in occupied Afrin

ANF | 5 MARCH 2023

Jihadist mercenary groups under Turkish control continue their crimes against nature in the occupied Afrin canton in northern Syria.

According to the Rojava-based Hawar News agency (ANHA) citing local sources, the Faylaq al-Sham mercenaries have cut down 79 olive trees in the village of Kefer Nebo in Sherawa district.

The felled trees belonged to local citizens Ehmed Nebo Gulê Xeyrî and Xelîl Nebo Gule Xeyrî.

On the other hand, Sultan Murad mercenaries cut down 9 fruit trees belonging to resident Reşîd Şêxo in the village of Qasim.

Mercenaries from the same group felled 50 olive trees and 3 fruit trees belonging to resident Ehmed Oso in the village of Qurtqolaqê.

The Turkish state and its mercenaries, which occupied Afrin in March 2018, have turned the city into a hotbed of crimes, continuing to commit crimes including theft, kidnapping, rape, massacre, demographic change and destruction of nature in an attempt to displace the people of the region.

Hundreds of people have been murdered and hundreds of thousands of others have been displaced in Afrin since it was occupied in violation of international law. Nearly 500 thousand foreigners and families of mercenaries have been settled in the city in their place.

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## Human Rights Violations

### Court of Appeals upholds acquittal of non-commissioned officers who attacked Umut Bookshop

ANF | 1 MARCH 2023

The Supreme Court of Appeals upheld the acquittal of Turkish non-commissioned officers Ali Kaya, Özcan İldeniz and informer Veysel Ateş who attacked the Umut Bookshop in Şemdinli in 2005.

The three were caught red-handed while fleeing after leaving a bomb at the Umut Bookshop. However, the 3rd Penal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Appeals, upheld the decision of the Van 1st High Court on 3 defendants who were accused of “killing people”, “forming a criminal organization” and “attempting to kill people”. The court claimed that there was no definite, concrete and convincing evidence that the defendants had committed the alleged crime.

Yaşar Büyükanıt, the Commander of the Turkish Land Forces at the time, said: “I know, they are good guys”, speaking about officers Ali Kaya and Özcan İldeniz.

#### What happened?

A bomb attack was carried out against the Umut Bookshop in Şemdinli, in the province of Hakkari, on 9 November 2005. The bookshop belonged to Seferi Yılmaz, who later was elected mayor of the city.

Ali Yılmaz and Mehmet Zahir Korkmaz lost their lives in the attack. The responsible of the attack, non-commissioned military officers Ali Kaya and Özcan İldeniz and informer Veyse Ateş were caught by people while fleeing.



In the vehicle of the perpetrators, four folders with 300 pages were found, including three lists with the names of 105 people written on them as well as sketches, maps, ID cards and written permissions. Another document contained the picture of 18 prospective delegate candidates of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP).

Following the attack, the then Commander of Land Forces Yaşar Büyükanıt, who later became the Chief of General Staff, made a statement about the suspects and said, "I know [them], they are good boys."

An investigation was launched into the attack on 22 November 2005. Ali Özcan, Özcan İlideniz and informant Veysel Ateş were arrested on 28 November. The non-commissioned officers were sent to military prison.

On 19 June 2006, the Van 3rd High Criminal Court ruled that Kaya and İlideniz should be sentenced to 39 years, 10 months, 27 days in prison on charges of "killing, establishing a criminal organization and attempted murder."

### **Prosecutor expelled from profession**

Right before the final hearing was held, the prosecutor who issued the indictment, Ferhat Sarıkaya, was expelled from the profession. Sarıkaya said that the military personnel involved in the incident were assigned as part of the Security Order Assistance (EMASYA) and this assignment formed a network of responsibility within a chain of command to the General Staff.

### **Released after first hearing**

Afterwards, the Court of Cassation overturned the local court ruling. Abiding by the ruling dated 27 November 2007, the new court board transferred the case file to the Van Gendarmerie Public Order Command Military Court at the Van Central Command. The arrested defendants were released at their first hearing on 14 December 2007.

After the legal regulation paving the way for soldiers' trial at civilian courts was approved, the intervening lawyers applied to the High Criminal Court and requested that a decision of non-jurisdiction be given for the trial going on at the Military Court (until 22 December 2010) and the case file be sent again to the Van 3rd High Criminal Court.

### **New arrest warrant**

In May 2011, the Court of Jurisdictional Disputes ruled that the case should be heard again by the Van 3rd High Criminal Court. Issuing a preliminary proceedings report, the Van 3rd High Criminal Court issued another arrest warrant against the defendants of the Şemdinli case, non-commissioned officers Ali Kaya and Özcan İlideniz and informant Veysel Ateş.

The defendants were arrested again on 9 June 2011.

At the hearing held on January 10, 2012, the defendants were sentenced to 39 years, 5 months, 10 days each in prison on charges of "killing", "establishing an organization" and "attempted killing."

## Released again

Following the failed coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016, the lawyers of the convicted defendants applied to the Van 1st High Criminal Court upon the confessions of the then Van Chief Public Prosecutor Ferhat Sarıkaya about the case and requested retrial.

Accepting this request on 11 October 2017, the court ruled for the defendants' release. At the last hearing held by the Van 1st High Criminal Court, the court first acquitted the three defendants of "establishing an organization" and ruled for a retrial on charges of "killing and injury".

In December 2021, the three defendants were acquitted. Umut Bookshop's owner, Seferi Yılmaz, criticised the final decision of the Prosecutor's Office as biased and following the instructions of the government. "The acquittal decision came as a result of the instructions of the current government, rather than an independent decision of the Van 1st High Criminal Court," he said.

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## Bitlis Journalists Association President sentenced to 10 months in prison

ANF | BITLIS | 1 MARCH 2023

Sinan Aygöl, President of Bitlis (Bedlis) Journalists Association, was detained a few hours after he shared a report he wrote about the sexual harassment of a girl in Tatvan on 13 December 2022. Aygöl was arrested on 14 December by the decision of the Tatvan Criminal Court of Peace and was released on 22 December. The first hearing of the trial in which journalist Aygöl is accused of "publicly disseminating misleading information to the public (TCK 217/A)" was held at the Tatvan Criminal Court of First Instance on Tuesday.

Aygöl used his right to remain silent to protest the Disinformation Law. The prosecution demanded that Aygöl be sentenced to imprisonment from 1 to 3 years for the crime of "publicly disseminating misleading information to the public" regulated in Article 217/a of the Turkish Penal Code. The court decided that Aygöl had committed the crime and sentenced him to 10 months in prison.

If the decision is upheld, Aygöl will serve his 10-month prison sentence in jail.

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## Police take Left Party members into custody in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 2 MARCH 2023

Police in Istanbul attacked the action that the Left Party members and executives organized to demand the government's resignation. Activists of the Left Party came together in Kadıköy to protest the sale of the tents the victims of the earthquake were waiting for, by the Red Crescent, and demanded the government to resign.

Police attacked the demonstration and took several people into custody. Among those detained were Left Party PM member Alper Taş and Left Party Istanbul Provincial Chairman Deniz Demirdöven.

Lawyers were prevented from meeting with their clients by the police. The police also attacked the citizens in the vicinity who protested the detention of Left Party members. Many people, including BirGün newspaper journalist Asena Tanır and lawyers, were detained.



## HDP MP Tiryaki: AKP may pave the way for voter migration

ANF | 2 MARCH 2023

Hundreds of thousands of people had to migrate to other cities after the earthquake that struck 11 provinces on February 6, killing tens of thousands of people. Following the mass migrations, concerns have emerged over the possibility of these displaced people voting in the upcoming elections. Although officials argue that there would be no problem with voting in the elections, the government remains reluctant to bring the issue to the agenda, prompting democratic mass organizations and political parties to take action.

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Istanbul Provincial Organization announced that it had established a special commission to ensure that the earthquake victims who migrated to the Marmara region could vote in the next elections. Members of the commission said that the opposition parties should tackle the issue, since the government does not want to bring this matter to the agenda in order to prevent earthquake victims from voting.

### Election during state of emergency

According to the HDP party assembly member Cengiz Topbaşlı, millions of displaced earthquake victims will not be able to go to their hometowns to vote in the upcoming elections. Members of HDP's election commission stated that it was not known how long the state of emergency declared in the earthquake areas would remain in force, adding that there would be risks if voters were taken to their cities in the earthquake area. Topbaşlı said that the government did not have any roadmap about how millions of voters would vote in the upcoming elections.

Topbaşı remarked that elections in the impacted regions would be held under extraordinary conditions. He noted that the HDP may be prevented from taking the victims to the region for elections, and entry to the region may be prohibited for various reasons. Therefore, the HDP has started to work for people to vote in their new settlements during the election process.

### **Tiryaki: Quake victims remain eligible for voting**

HDP Batman Deputy and YSK member Mehmet Rüştü Tiryaki told ANF that the HDP has been in the earthquake area since the first day of the earthquake and reorganized its work accordingly. Tiryaki stated that the government left the earthquake victims to their fate instead of creating opportunities for them to maintain their lives, and transported hundreds of thousands of them to other cities free of charge. He said: “There are concerns about the electoral status of those who left their cities due to the earthquake. First, I would like to point out that whether they stay in their hometowns or have to migrate to other cities, these people are still eligible to vote in the coming elections.”

Tiryaki continued: “Citizens have two options. The first is to update their place of residence in the cities they moved to. In this way, they will be able to vote. The second option is to vote by going back to the earthquake area where they officially reside. We are trying to find out how many people have moved, and which cities they mostly go to. So, we are doing a kind of feasibility study. Based on the data, we will develop a strategy and work so that the earthquake victims displaced to other cities can vote. Moreover, we will carry out intensive work with our colleagues in order to create safe conditions for voting in the earthquake area, and we will closely monitor the work of the election boards.”

### **‘Voter migration’**

Tiryaki continued: “I do not think that the government will try to prevent voters who have moved to other cities. The main reason is the fact that the AKP is the biggest party in most of the 11 cities devastated by the earthquakes. For this reason, I think that they will make much more effort to get them to vote. The issue is whether the government will try to pave the way for voter migration in Turkey under the guise of facilitating voting conditions in the cities the victims moved to. I would like to draw attention to this danger. We will follow this closely.”

### **A policy of depopulation**

Tiryaki raised concern over the depopulation efforts in the earthquake-hit areas where Kurds and Arab Alevis predominantly reside. Tiryaki emphasized that the Kurdish Alevi population was encouraged to leave their cities. He concluded: “I think that the government will introduce a policy of depopulation, and will even try to pave the way for demographic changes in some parts of the earthquake area, especially in the regions where Kurds and Alevis live predominantly. Against this, we will make efforts to create the conditions for the return of people who had to leave their homes and cities. We can achieve this through sister family campaigns that we will carry out, based on democratic mass organizations and local and international solidarity.”

## IYI party withdraws from electoral alliance

ANF | ANKARA | 3 MARCH 2023

The IYI party, a breakaway of the far-right MHP, which together with the CHP and other parties founded the “Alliance of the Nation” (Millet İttifakı), apparently wants to withdraw from the electoral coalition known as the “Table of Six”. The alliance announced after a meeting on Thursday that they had agreed on a common candidate for the presidential election on 12 May, with the name to be announced on Monday. According to reports, the candidate will be CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

However, IYI Chairperson Meral Akşener said today that her party rejected the candidacy of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and called on Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavaş, both also from the CHP, to run.

The “Alliance of the Nation” is seen as a counterpart to the governing coalition AKP/MHP, which is running as the “People’s Alliance” (Cumhur İttifakı) in the upcoming elections in Turkey.

The Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) has formed the Alliance for Labour and Freedom (Emek ve Özgürlük İttifakı) with the Social Freedom Party (TÖP), the Labour Movement Party (EHP), the Federation of Socialist Councils (SMF), the Workers’ Party of Turkey (TİP) and the Labour Party (EMEP), which intends to run its own candidate in the parliamentary elections.

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## ISIG says that at least 301 workers lost their lives in January and February

ANF | ISTANBUL | 4 MARCH 2023

ISIG said that at least 301 workers lost their lives in January and February.

The Occupational Health and Safety Observatory (ISIG) released its report on deaths in the workplace for January and February. ISIG reported that 119 workers lost their lives in January and at least 182 workers in February.

In January, the report said that 32 percent of occupational homicides were due to traffic accidents, 19 percent to crushing and 19 percent to falling from height. The sector with the highest number of occupational homicides is construction, while Istanbul is one of the cities with the highest number of deaths.

ISIG underlined that all workers who died in the workplace due to the Maraş-centered earthquakes in February or in the region hit by the seism (due to activities such as temporary assignments) would be con-

sidered occupational homicides (in the official term, work accidents). In other words, most of the deaths in February occurred in the earthquake region.

According to the report, 53 percent of worker deaths in February occurred in Adiyaman (Semsûr), Maraş and Hatay, all earthquake zones.



## Urfa Bar Association: Detainees were tortured in Suruç

ANF | URFA | 4 MARCH 2023

The Human Rights Center (IHM) of Urfa Bar Association announced that Mehmet Samur, Adle Samur and Reşat Yıldız had been subjected to torture and ill-treatment in custody in Suruç district.

According to the statement on the social media, the IHM staff was notified on 2 March and met with the three detainees to see two of them subjected to physical torture, with bruises on parts of their bodies.

“Despite the visibility of torture and ill-treatment, doctors were seen not to have implemented the Istanbul Protocol as the medical process took place under the control of the police. Our center will bring the torture and ill-treatment suffered by the detainees under record, and file criminal charges against the police officers involved and the public personnel who neglected their duties. Our report on torture and ill-treatment will be published within a week.”

Lawyer Ali Aslan, a member of the Urfa branch of the Lawyers for Freedom Association and a defender of the detainees, also said on his social media account that, “A mother and father in their 60s were tortured in the anti-terror police (TEM) in Urfa, subjected to beating, bastinado, attempted strangling, thrown into a pit and put a gun to the head.”



## HDP co-chairs condemn racist attack against players and supporters of Amedspor in Bursa

ANF | ANKARA | 6 MARCH 2023

HDP co-chairs, Pervin Buldan and Mithat Sancar condemned the racist attack carried out against players of Amedspor in Bursa on Sunday.

In a written statement, Buldan and Sancar said: “We are faced with images of organized lynching against Amedspor in Bursa. First of all, we convey our best wishes to everyone who has been subjected to this unacceptable organized lynching and fascism, and state that we stand by them.”

The statement continued: “The attacks, which started with racist chants in front of the law enforcement officers below the hotel where Amedspor players were staying on Saturday night, did not stop during the day. As if racist slogans and words weren’t enough, photographs of JİTEM (special teams) killers were shown by ‘supporters’ of Bursa sport. There was even a photo of the White Toros car, which is known for having been used in dozens of kidnappings and murder of Kurdish civilians.”

The statement added: “This climate of racism, fascism and hatred is not the plan of a handful of hooligans. The Turkish Football Federation, which allowed the match to be played, as well as the Governorship and the police, who allowed those criminal elements to carry out their lynching, are clearly guilty and partners in crime. They should resign immediately.

This climate of hatred and patriotic nationalist chauvinism is the lifeblood of the current power and regime. This is the only environment they desire. We will never allow any attempt to paramilitize the entire society.

Common sense is our open call to the public: Let’s not allow this organized, racist and fascist environment to become the norm. Let’s oppose all kinds of fascist policies and practices together.”



## Press conference against racist attack in Bursa: “Amedspor is not alone”

ANF | AMED | 6 MARCH 2023

The Amedspor football team was welcomed by thousands of fans and people in solidarity on their return to Amed (tr. Diyarbakir) after the lynching attacks at the away match in Bursa. The Platform for Protection and Solidarity, an alliance of more than 80 non-governmental organisations formed after the earthquake in the city, held a press conference with fan groups of the football club and denounced the organised racist attacks at the match against Bursaspor on Sunday.

Burç Baysal, chairman of Amedspor’s advisory board, pointed out that it was the club’s first match after the earthquake and Kurdish teams are constantly confronted with racist chants. Referring to the use of racist symbols in yesterday’s match, Baysal explained that they were meant to remind Kurdish society of the bloody 1990s and it was clearly perceived that way by the Kurds. Baysal said: “We do not believe that only the fan community living in Bursa is involved in these incidents. Our teams have been affected by these incidents for many years. Amedspor and our regional teams are not teams that can be marginalised and segregated. All political components, employees in the state bureaucracy and the sporting public should know this very clearly.”

## **Authorities did not take preventive measures to stop racist attacks**

Nahit Eren, President of the Amed Bar Association, issued a statement on behalf of the NGOs, pointing out that the attacks started the day before the match: “The Amedspor club was subjected to insults, threats and racially motivated hate speech by a group of people who appeared in front of the hotel where the technical team and football players were staying before the match against Bursaspor. The authorities did not take sufficient preventive measures to stop these acts, which started accompanied by fireworks before the match. The judiciary did not initiate proceedings against the perpetrators and the authorities did not issue preventive and condemnatory statements. Encouraged by this lack of response, unacceptable and criminal attacks and acts were committed the next day during the competition.”

### **“We must stick together”**

Regarding the match day proceedings, Eren stated that the attacks started again when the Amedspor footballers and technical team entered the pitch and continued until they left the stadium: “From the first moment the Amedspor footballers and technical delegation entered the pitch until the moment they left the stadium, they were subjected to physical and verbal attacks from Bursaspor footballers, technical staff and spectators, as well as hateful and abusive chants from the spectators.”

The signs displayed in the spectator stands with names of paramilitary forces and pictures of white Toros Renaults associated with the unsolved murders and forced disappearances in the 1990s are a clear indication of organised racism, said Eren and continued: “We are aware of the message that is meant to be conveyed by the display of these symbols, which with all their darkness are embedded in the memory of Kurdish society, during a football match. These threats are meant to create an atmosphere of fear.”

Eren pointed out that the threats and ruthlessness against the Kurds are fuelled by the impunity for the acts in the 1990s and said, “In the days when we as a country mourn the pain caused by a great earthquake disaster and show great solidarity to heal the wounds together, we must stand together against the evil that is aimed by these ugly incidents. Amedspor inspires people in our city and in many parts of the country with its success and sportsmanship. Unfortunately, this feeling created by Amedspor is not resonating and supported by the authorities, especially in our city, and Amedspor’s already limited opportunities are being restricted, with penalties and exclusion being imposed. We cannot say that the events of the last two days are independent of this attitude of the public authorities towards Amedspor. However, everyone should know that Amedspor is not alone and that the entire institutional dynamics of our city and its supporters across the country will continue to support the team. We would like to make the following clear: If the authorities remain silent and do not react to what happened yesterday and the day before, if there are no sporting and criminal sanctions and if those responsible do not resign, it means that these actions are approved.”

### **Complaint to UEFA**

Eren went on to say that Amedspor would appeal to UEFA’s Ethics and Disciplinary Body due to the racist and discriminatory behaviour during and before the match: “Hate speech and criminal offences pose a significant threat to the principle of equality, which is one of the prerequisites for a democratic social order, as well as to sports law. We recall that the prohibition of hate and discrimination is one of the funda-



mental principles of international human rights protection and call on the judicial authorities to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. We call for the immediate launch of investigations against the governor and the chief of police in Bursa, as well as against all public officials responsible for the serious acts that endangered social peace during the competition and who did not take the necessary precautions from the first night.”

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## Nation Alliance says its presidential candidate will be CHP chair Kılıçdaroğlu

ANF | ANKARA | 6 MARCH 2023

The Nation Alliance convened to determine the presidential candidate after IYI Party chair Meral Akşener returned to the alliance she had left only a couple of days ago.

After the meeting, Saadet Party chair, Temel Karamollaoğlu, announced that the Presidential candidate of the Nation Alliance will be CHP chair Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. The elections are expected to be held on 14 May.

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## Interview

### Hozat: The disaster of the century is the AKP-MHP power

ANF | 2 MARCH 2023

KCK Executive Council co-chair Besê Hozat said in an interview with Medya Haber: “If we are going to talk about the disaster of the century, the disaster of the century is the AKP-MHP fascist government.”

Hozat said: “Turkey and Kurdistan are an earthquake zone. This is a known fact. But until now, there have been no appropriate architectural measures. Precautions have not been taken accordingly. Now, a huge earthquake took place there, a great disaster happened. The fascist government also talks about this and calls it the biggest disaster of the century. The press affiliated with the ruling circles also covers this topic very intensely and refers to it as the disaster of the century as well. So is this earthquake really the disaster of the century, or is it the mentality and the government? This is a very serious matter of debate. It is clear that the AKP-MHP regime is the disaster of the century. Earthquakes are natural disasters. In many parts of the world, earthquakes far stronger than this one regularly occur. The example of Japan has been dis-

cussed a lot recently. Japan experiences earthquakes with a magnitude of over 9, but there are no serious losses of life there. The buildings in Japan are higher than the buildings in Turkey, but they do not suffer any damage. This is the case in many parts of the world. So why is there so much destruction in Turkey? Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives. Millions of people have suffered great pain and have been traumatized for years and decades. This has happened because of the fascist government in Turkey, which is the real cause of the disaster. The greatest disaster of the century is the fascist AKP-MHP government.”

Hozat continued: “Erdoğan says, ‘this is destiny, we need to understand this as fate’. He really takes people for fools, for a herd. But this period is over now. He has done this a lot until now and has achieved a certain level of results. He made a certain section of people believe in the perceptions created by him. Those who didn’t believe in it, he gathered them around himself with the help of nationalism, religion and racism and aligned the opposition with the slogan of ‘homeland, nation, Sakarya’. But now this period is over. The fascist dictator Erdoğan can no longer deceive society by calling the recent developments destiny. The opposite is the case: Now the people and society will determine Erdoğan’s destiny.

There are reports that Erdogan has collected more than 100 billion [dollars] since 1999. Some say 48 billion, others 83 billion. But most likely the amount of money collected exceeds 100 billion. Where did this money go? Let’s leave the earthquake tax aside for a moment. Every day a lot of taxes are being collected from the people, billions [of dollars] are being collected. These taxes are collected to serve the people. Everywhere in the world, states collect taxes for this purpose. This money is supposed to be returned to the people in the form of services. So where do these taxes go? Besides the earthquake tax, where do these taxes go? These taxes are spent on the genocidal war against the Kurds. They went to the war of sociocide in Turkey. The money goes to the war of genocide against nature and is turned into profit. It goes to the AKP’s and Erdoğan’s trolls. It goes to Erdoğan’s Sadat [private military company in Turkey] and to his Islamist proxy-forces. For 11 years, an army of tens of thousands of Islamist proxy fighters has been established. The Turkish state, this fascist government, provides all the training and equipment, logistics, ammunition, maintenance, livelihood and shelter to these gangs. Where does this money come from? From the taxes paid by the people. The genocidal war against the Kurds is being waged with the taxes of the people. Every day tons of bombs rain down on the mountains of Kurdistan. The price of each bomb was hundreds of thousands of dollars, as they themselves admitted. Since the recent earthquake, thousands of bombs have continued to be dropped non-stop. All the taxes are spent on this, they go to profit-seekers, to their own lackeys and supporters. An elite has formed around the palace, a bourgeoisie has formed and this bourgeoisie is getting richer every day based on the people’s taxes. They each have billions of dollars in different banks around the world.”

Hozat added: “What is happening now in Turkey and Kurdistan is definitely a sociocide. Whole cities have disappeared. Hatay, Adıyaman, Antep, Malatya, Maraş and Iskenderun, their districts and villages have been wiped off the map. In other words, a whole region has been completely destroyed. The governor of Şırnak said recently that the number of lost lives was 5 times higher than the official numbers. At that time, they had already announced 40 thousand deaths. Multiply this by 5 and you can see that he was talking about 200 thousand deaths. But there are also more than 200 thousand people missing. People are still under the rubble. A societicide has been perpetrated. People have been left to die everywhere. We have always said that this state is a genocidal state, that this is a genocidal government. This is obvious because this state has been pursuing such a policy against the Kurds for 100 years. It has also been carrying out an all-out genocidal attack on the Kurds for the last 7 years. Now it has inflicted the same kind of genocide

on the society of Turkey and Kurdistan in the 15 to 17 days after the earthquake – in front of the eyes of the world. This will have very heavy consequences. There is a measure they call the construction amnesty. This amnesty means opening the geography of Turkey and Kurdistan to plunder, extortion and theft. It means providing a legitimate ground for opportunists and thieves.

The area where this earthquake took place is a geography historically inhabited by Kurds and Arab Alevi. They [AKP-MHP government] will implement a very serious migration policy in this territory after the earthquake. We know that they have already started to implement it. They will want to bring the genocide plan to a conclusion here by gradually changing the demography in this area. This is one of the first areas where the Eastern Reform Plan [Şark Islahat Planı] was implemented. The Maraş Massacre [in December 1978] was also carried out on this basis. The main aim of the Maraş Massacre was to completely uproot the Kurdish Alevi from west of the Euphrates river. The aim was to kill those who lived there and to force the remaining people to migrate. It was to completely de-Kurdify and de-Alevize this geography. It was to purge all Kurdish Alevi from this area. The same policy has also been pursued against Arab Alevi over the years. Now this is being carried out in a very intense way. With this earthquake, they will put this policy into practice even more seriously. There are already signs of this. People are being displaced and forced to migrate. Especially to the towns and villages where a lot of Alevi live, no aid went to those villages and towns where both Kurdish Alevi and Arab Alevi live. The people there were completely left to die. The approach was that those who died would die and those who were left would be forced to migrate anyway. Now a serious policy is being implemented in this regard. This is a 100-year old policy of the state. The AKP-MHP government wants to bring this to a conclusion. It wants to use the earthquake for this. This is very clear. But our people are aware of this.”

Hozat continued: “We have been waging a great struggle against this genocide policy for decades. There is a serious awareness among our people with regards to this issue. They should never fall for these policies. Our people should not leave their places and land. They may experience difficulties and pain. But they should never leave their land. In the areas they might migrate to, they will face pain ten times greater than this. They will face great hardships and lose their honor, all their values, memory and their history there. Migration will lead to such severe consequences. Therefore, our people must endure the current hardships and suffering and not allow to be separated from their geography, even just for a period of time. Our people in the country and abroad need to provide very serious support to our people, develop serious projects and rebuild all the affected areas in the spring. The Kurdish and Alevi villages and towns there can easily be rebuilt. One or two-storey buildings can be built very easily in the spring. So far, with the support of our people, there has been serious help both from inside and outside the country. If this solidarity and support continues, we can really rebuild our villages. We can rebuild our towns and we can rebuild them very solidly. With solidarity, a common spirit and financial support, we can turn these places into living spaces again. The fascist, genocidal and colonialist state and the government pursue a plan to completely de-Kurdify and de-Alevize these areas. This is a genocide plan and it must never be allowed to happen. Displacement constitutes genocide. In order to defeat this plan, the people should not leave their land. They should also not sell their land and places to the state. They must not fall for such games and traps. This is very important right now. Because the people are very desperate. They are in great distress and pain. Based on this desperation, a lot of games, traps and plans are being made by the genocidal forces. Everyone should be very sensitive about this. People should not sell their land, place and homeland and should stay in their places. We must rebuild these places and re-establish our lives in our lands. This is important. This is how the genocide plan will be defeated. This is also a struggle, this is also resistance.

A really strong social solidarity has emerged. Both from other cities, villages and towns of North Kurdistan and from South Kurdistan. The KDP and the Turkish state tried to prevent the help of our people from South Kurdistan, but they showed a very serious example of solidarity. Even though Rojava and the people of North and East Syria were themselves affected by the earthquake, they showed serious solidarity and support for North Kurdistan and the earthquake zones in Turkey. A significant number of our people from this earthquake zone have been living in Europe for years. A very serious example of solidarity has emerged there as well. There was a very strong solidarity from our international friends as well. In Turkey, the HDP, HDK, DTK, DBP, other non-governmental organizations, cemevis [Alevi places of worship] and the Democratic Islamic Movement have shown very strong support. Many lives were saved with their help. People were pulled out from under the rubble. Those who came out from under the rubble found a tent, food and water. This is a great example of solidarity. A great national consciousness, national spirit and national solidarity have emerged among the Kurds both at the international and national level. The same is true for the women's movement. Both the Women's Movement in Turkey and the Kurdistan Women's Freedom Movement have mobilized all their resources. They have shown a very strong example of solidarity. In all cities, all women worked hard, and all non-governmental organizations as well. Organized, oppositional, democratic political structures worked hard. All these structures organized themselves very quickly. And they intervened very quickly. Thus, they have really shown a great example of solidarity."

Hozat added: "In this sense, it has really been our people, the civil institutions and the democratically organized structures that intervened in the earthquake zones. There was no such intervention by the state. On the contrary, the state obstructed the solidarity of the people and the civil society organizations. The intervention of this fascist government, this fascist state, was mainly directed against the structures that were in solidarity with society. Due to this solidarity, some of the wounds of society have been healed and society has been able to remain on its feet. It is important to continue like that. This must be transformed into a form of permanent organization. This earthquake has revealed how important self-organization is, how great a need for self-administration is, how necessary all this is. In a way, this earthquake has also led to the collapse of the fascist nation-state system. It has shown how unnecessary these centralized fascist nation-state systems are, how anti-social they are, how anti-human, anti-society they are. It has revealed how vital self-administration, democratic autonomous structures, democratic confederal systems and self-organization are. In this sense, this has also been a test of Leader Apo's democratic nation, democratic autonomous system and democratic confederal system. The social solidarity has revealed how much these projects resonate with society in Turkey and how strong the grounds for this are. And it has also revealed that Turkey will no longer be the old Turkey. In other words, Turkey cannot be governed by such a rigid, centralist, fascist nation state system and administration. The construction of a democratic republic based on self-administration can sustain Turkey and keep it alive. This is also true for the whole world. This is a global trend. In Turkey, this reality imposes itself as a sine qua non. It is necessary to organize the people on this basis."

### **Democratic confederal system provides a solution to current crisis**

"The 25th anniversary of the conspiracy has coincided with a major earthquake. This has naturally affected the plans to protest against the conspiracy. There was going to be a big protest in Turkey, in North Kurdistan, a demonstration towards Gemlik. But this protest had to be postponed. The planned protests in Europe were also affected. But at the same time, especially in Rojava and in North and East Syria, huge protests took place. There have been very serious protests in North Kurdistan for several months, not just limited to February. There are ideological, political and diplomatic efforts against the conspiracy. In this

context, there is a struggle in Kurdistan and abroad. Huge protests have also taken place in Europe and South Kurdistan [North Iraq]. I salute all these protests of our people. Of course, our international friends have also made very serious efforts in this regard. They have really contributed a great deal and worked very hard to put the isolation and the physical freedom of Leader Apo on the international agenda. As the ideas of the Leadership [Abdullah Öcalan] and his paradigm spread, the effects of this in the region and the world are becoming stronger.

There is really great support from women, the peoples, the democratic public, intellectuals, writers and artists. Recently, important concerts have also taken place at the international level. In this sense, a very serious level of support has emerged in the art community as well.”

“We can see the following very clearly: as the paradigm of the Leadership is introduced to the world and society, a very strong level of support emerges. Because everyone sees their future and freedom in this paradigm. Free life and a democratic, free and equal system are realized based on this paradigm. Everyone understands this. This is very important. This whole process, the struggle against the conspiracy that has developed over the years, has made very clear that the 21st century and the centuries to come will be centuries in which the democratic nation paradigm and the democratic confederal system will come to life. This is being discussed in many circles in the world today.

The democratic confederal system based on democracy, ecology and women’s freedom is being discussed as the main solution and as an alternative to the current crisis. As a fundamental solution to the problems of humanity, to all the problems faced by peoples and societies, to all the problems faced by women, to the ecological problems that have reached a catastrophic level. It is being discussed as the basic solution, as an alternative way of life. And the respective consciousness is gradually evolving as well. The search is increasing. Organizations for this cause are developing.

All this is very important and valuable. This will gradually increase. It will spread and be organized by societies in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and all over the world as a fundamental solution, as an alternative way of life. The centuries to come will be centuries in which the fascist nation-state system will be destroyed, the democratic confederal system based on autonomous democratic communal structures will develop, and the democratic nation philosophy, ideology and paradigm of Leader Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] will be organized and built. Thus, humanity will be able to sustain itself and continue its existence. It will live freely and democratically, justly and fairly. I truly believe in this. The groundwork for this has already been laid in every respect.”

“For Turkey, this constitutes a fundamental solution in every aspect, that is, in overcoming the current problems, in solving the Kurdish problem, in democratizing Turkey, in building a democratic republic. The project of Leader Apo, the democratic nation project, is a fundamental solution project for Turkey as well. Today, those who defend the rule of law cannot establish a democratic rule of law in Turkey without putting an end to the lawlessness in İmralı. Those who defend justice in Turkey cannot build a just system in Turkey without putting an end to the injustice in İmralı, without taking a stance against it. Those who defend democracy, equality and freedom in Turkey cannot build a democratic, free and equal life without opposing the lawlessness, injustice, unscrupulousness and immorality in İmralı, without opposing this policy that is being carried out there. This is a fact. In this sense, a very strong struggle against the conspiracy took place in 2022. In the coming year, this struggle will increase in order to ensure the physical freedom of Leader Apo. We will definitely achieve the physical freedom of Leader Apo in 2023

## Elections an opportunity to build a democratic Turkey

“Now, the main agenda is the consequences of the earthquake. On the other hand, while this debate continues, the political climate in Turkey is also being discussed. The social structure of Turkey is being discussed, as well as the question of how the next phase and the future social structure of the country will be. There are very intense discussions with regards to the issue of self-administration. Before the earthquake, the Democratic Republic Conference took place. There were very serious discussions about self-administration, the democratic autonomous system, the importance of this for Turkey, the democratization of Turkey, the solution of the Kurdish question on a democratic basis and a solution on the basis of self-administration. Then the earthquake happened. In a way, the discussions held at that conference were confirmed during this earthquake. This is very important. These discussions will continue even more intensely from now on. And they need to continue. On the other hand, of course we are in an election process. The elections are being discussed. The AKP-MHP fascist regime is also discussing about postponing the elections. It has put this on the public agenda through people like Bülent Arınç. It is trying to measure the pulse of society. In this sense, I personally don't consider Bülent Arınç's statements independent of this fascist power and government. This issue is consciously put on the agenda in order to see what society and the public think. But they saw that there was a very serious reaction. If the election process is prolonged, the protests will increase, this regime will lose in a much worse way and very different situations will emerge. The political crisis, the social crisis and social protests will intensify in Turkey. The economic crisis will deepen as well. They see this. In this respect, there are obviously some discussions in the government. There are some discussions about holding the elections on time on June 18, if not May 14.”

“Now there are discussions about holding the elections on time. Let's see. Of course, they are measuring the daily reactions. Accordingly, they change their style and policy on a daily basis. Turkey is in an election process. We can clearly foresee the following: This fascist government will increase the repression even more, especially until the elections. It will intensify its genocide policy, its war and violence against the Kurds. It has mobilized all state means for this. At the same time, it will continue to intensify the pressure on the society in Turkey, on the democratic forces and on both the democratic opposition and the opposition within the system. It will intensify the pressure on the democratic press, on the public and on society. In this way, they will try to usurp the elections through pressure, violence, force and tyranny. They will try to remain in power, but all their attempts are futile. This government has completed its time. Until now, this fascist genocidal power has survived because there has been no effective opposition, no strong social resistance and struggle. But from now on, neither society nor the opposition will allow this to continue.”

“Turkey cannot be democratized through restoration. A democratic rule of law cannot be established in Turkey through restoration. A democratic, fair and just system cannot be established in the country through restoration. A democratic republic cannot be built in Turkey through restoration. The way to a democratic republic is through a democratic solution to the Kurdish question. The democratic solution to the Kurdish question means the construction of a democratic republic based on self-administration. It means the reconstruction of Turkey on a democratic foundation based on self-administration. In this sense, the fascist, denialist and exterminationist nation state mentality must be radically overcome. It means the reconstruction of a democratic republic through the solution of the Kurdish and Alevi problems on a democratic basis. The current phase has created the ground for this. A serious awareness has also developed in society with regards to this issue. This earthquake has, to a certain extent, led to overcoming the perceptions against the Kurds, the Kurdish Freedom Movement and democratic politics which had been

created by the fascist government on the basis of racism, religion and special warfare. In this sense, an important basis for the democratic struggle has emerged. The society, the leaders of society and the revolutionary-democratic political leaders need to make use of this development. In this sense, the opposition's approach to this election based on a common attitude will take this government down. Both the democratic opposition and the 'National Alliance'-opposition are gradually developing a common policy to bring down this fascist government. This is important. But this must lead to an approach based on the democratic solution of the Kurdish question and the democratization of Turkey. The main perspective is not to carry out a restoration of Turkey. It is to build Turkey on a truly democratic basis. It is to create a democratic republic. The strengthened parliamentary system should be based on this perspective, this philosophy, this understanding of construction. In other words, the strengthened parliamentary system should not lead to a pre-AKP parliamentary system since it was also based on the mentality of denial and annihilation. The strengthened parliamentary system needs to be based on the democratic solution of the Kurdish question and the construction of a democratic republic with self-administration as its basis. This will lead Turkey to a democratic, free and just future. This is what I truly believe in."

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## 'Democratic Confederalism is the equal unity of diversities'

PIRAN DOZDAR / XEBATKAR RAPERIN | BEHDINAN | 5 MARCH 2023

Democratic Confederalism as a radical democratic alternative to capitalist modernity and state society has proven time and again that it is not a utopia for a time after the abolition of the state model, but a form of self-organisation and self-defence based on ecological, women's liberation and communalist principles. The first practical experiences of implementing Democratic Confederalism were made in Northern Kurdistan. The model of Rojava was built on these experiences, based on the principles of the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. In the first part of an interview with ANF, the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) Executive Council member Xebat Andok talks about the meaning of Democratic Confederalism, its regional and global approaches and the model of self-organisation.

### *What is Democratic Confederalism?*

Democratic Confederalism is a system of organising a democratic society. In this respect, it is not a movement or a party, but a social system. It can be implemented in Kurdistan as well as Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. If we expand it, it could also be an alternative for the Middle East, Europe, the whole of America and Africa. The KCK is the expression of Democratic Confederalism in Kurdistan. The same is possible for Iran, Iraq, Syria or any other country. If all peoples, ethnicities, cultural identities, religious beliefs, in short, all societies and peoples in the Middle East want to take such a system as a basis, then it is possible to establish such a confederalism under the name "Democratic Confederalism of the Peoples of the Middle East" or some other name. It would be possible to establish something similar in the Americas, in Europe, Africa or on other continents. And if it were introduced throughout the world, it would be the World Confederalism of Democratic Peoples. It is a system in which all parts of society, from local to global, from small to large, organise themselves and realise their self-government.

*What does this mean in terms of content?*

Since it is an alternative system to the existing nation state and the prevailing etatist system in general, it is based on the organisation of the people and society as a whole and their self-defence. If we look closely, Democratic Confederalism consists of two basic concepts. One is democracy and the other is confederalism. Confederalism is a very flexible system of relations based on voluntarism. There is no written constitution. There is no obligation. Collectivity, like separation, is based on voluntariness.

*Who comes together in this sense?*

The demos - that is, the people. Confederalism can encompass all ethnic communities, religious beliefs, cultural structures, men and women, every form of organisation that has come together to solve a social problem, and all components of society. In short, on this basis, all parts of society, the demos, the people, govern themselves. It is self-government. The people govern themselves and are not ruled by strangers or any remote government. A system is created in which all sectors of society come together within the framework of confederal relations on the basis of self-government.

This is based on two prerequisites: society must organise itself at all levels and with all components, and these organised structures must network. The form of relationship is what makes confederalism. There must be no form of relationship based on oppression, violence or ideological hegemony. It is a union based on equality and freedom. This is the confederal dimension. The other point is that it must be an organised society. All components of society can also organise themselves on the basis of the smallest units, their identities and affiliations. They organise autonomously on the basis of an understanding of local democracy and join together on the basis of confederal relations to create a stronger organisational unit. Democratic Confederalism is thus a system in which all the social components of the societies in Kurdistan, the region and the world organise themselves and at the same time constitute themselves as an entity beyond the states themselves through their relations with each other. It is only a local and, at the same time, global form of organising. This system is addressed not to the people of Kurdistan and the region alone, but also to all the oppressed of the world.

*But how can an organised democratic society be created in this way?*

It is not a form of organisation based on centralised parliamentarism. Instead, the classical form of the state is turned upside down. Democratic Confederalism starts from the smallest unit such as a village, a town, a street, the organisation of a neighbourhood, a factory or a house. In short, it is based on the organisation of all areas where people come together.

**From the commune to the peoples' congress**

The smallest organisational unit is the commune. The commune deals with all areas of life and is the smallest unit of direct democracy in which the people govern themselves. The commune is the smallest council. In the KCK social contract or in the existing theory of democratic confederalism, the commune therefore corresponds to a village assembly in which street and village organisation structures come together. At another level, representatives of the communes come together and form, for example, a council for the neighbourhood or the town. The point is that all problems are seen as community problems that need to be solved collectively. So, there are then further levels, from the city council to the provincial



council, to the regional council. Above that, for example, there would be the People's Council of a country. This could be transnational. The People's Congress would then be the decision-making body of a particular population group or people. If several communities are involved, a People's Congress could be formed. In the broadest sense, one can say that a congress of all peoples of the world is held when global decisions have to be taken.

### **A system of direct and radical democracy**

So, it is a council system and not a parliament. For example, in Turkey there is a parliament. Everything is decreed. This is something completely different. When we talk about Kurdistan or Turkey, we are not talking about two, three or five councils. In Germany, for example, there is federalism and several parliaments. In the USA, too, there is federalism and more than one parliament. But democratic confederalism is also different from that. It is a system involving thousands, maybe tens of thousands of councils and communes, all discussing and trying to find solutions to problems in their own areas, but at the same time interconnected. That is why Democratic Confederalism is also a system of councils. It is a system of direct democracy. It is a system in which no one rules over others, and all rule themselves and the community. It is not a system where some are in charge and others are governed. All rule and are ruled. It is a system where everyone, according to the definition of a political and moral person, thinks about the problems of society, looks for solutions, talks, discusses, makes decisions and assigns someone to put those decisions into action. It is a system where authority and power are completely in the hands of the people and direct democracy is realised. Since it is not governmental, it can also be called radical democracy.

### **Freedom and unity of differences**

The model can also be called communal democracy because it is about communal attitudes and communal life. Democracy here is not only understood in terms of raised and lowered hands or having a say in decisions. The spirit and life in this model are also different. Life is based on free, equal relationships. Again, if you want to put it in one sentence: it is a system in which there is an equal unity of differences. There is unity. Because society must form a unity on the question of who and what, a unity of differences. All identities retain their own differences. People are not regarded as equally meaningful or meaningless objects as in nation states. There should not be some subjects and otherwise objects in democratic confederalism. There are no rulers and no those ruled. All live with their differences and uniqueness. On the other hand, the nature of the relationship between people is one of equality. There is no superiority of one identity over another. Democratic confederalism can thus also be defined as the equal unity of diversities.

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## **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 re-

lease 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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