

THE İMRALI POST

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

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Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

Activists from Basel take over Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Vigil in Strasbourg

ANF | STRASBOURG | 8 MARCH 2023

The Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Vigil was launched on 25 June 2012 in Strasbourg to break the absolute isolation imposed on the Kurdish people's Leader and to demand his freedom.

The Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Vigil continues in its 559th week.

A group of activists from Basel took over the vigil. The group includes Delil Ek, Ferhat Öncül, Erdal Delek and Aram Amed.

Speaking on behalf of the Basel Democratic Kurdish Community Center, Delil Ek started his speech by expressing his condolences to the families of those who lost their lives due to the earthquakes in Kurdistan and wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. He said: "This earthquake showed the Kurdish people that we need to organize with our own strength, build our institutions and support each other. If we have expectations from the state, we will die, we will remain buried under the rubble, we will die of cold and hunger. This earthquake showed clearly that we need to organize and take care of ourselves."

Reminding that they are in Strasbourg to demand freedom for the Kurdish people's Leader, Delil Ek said: "The freedom of the Leader is the freedom of the Kurdish people." Ek added: "Our Leader has been held captive in İmralı prison for over two decades, unjustly and unlawfully. This is a vigil for justice, a vigil for humanity, conscience and morality. We will succeed. We have been carrying out this vigil uninterrupted for 11 years. We will continue to hold this action until our leadership is liberated."

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Preparations for "Challenging Capitalist Modernity" fourth conference continue

ANF | 8 MARCH 2023

The Network for an Alternative Quest is organizing the "Challenging Capitalist Modernity IV: We want our world back! Resist, Reclaim and Rebuild. Do Autonomous Education and Organize".

The conference will take place in Hamburg from 7 to 9 April.

The selection process of the papers has ended and the accepted papers will be sent to the organizing committee by 15 March.

Preparations are underway for the conference, which will be held at the university in Hamburg.

The Network for an Alternative Quest was formed to build bridges between the Kurds and different and alternative movements and thoughts in a context as a response to the need to discuss the Kurdish Freedom Movement (KFM) and its relations to other movements and emerging struggles around the world. Conferences that addressed the key ideological and philosophical issues of our times and KFM's position on it were organized for this purpose.

Multilingual conference

As usual, the conference is being carried out by a multitude of volunteers. Since the conference is multilingual, the interpreters play a very vital role in the success of the whole endeavor. In the previous conferences, the entire conference was interpreted simultaneously in Kurdish (Kurmanji), German, English, Turkish, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, and French.

To register, write to registration@networkaq.net

Please, watch the presentation video from here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oBMVv2LxMM&t=2s>



The Cell Without a Night premiered in Donostia/San Sebastian

ANF | DONOSTIA | 13 MARCH 2023

The European premier of the play “The Cell Without Night”, by Galder Irusta, was held on Sunday at the Viktoria Cultural Center in San Sebastian.

Written by Galder Irusta in 2019 and put on stage by director Mireia Gabilondo, the play shows how the four walls of an isolated cell can be used for unlimited human rights violations like a never-ending light, and being imprisoned in a tiny space for 24 hours a day.

“The Cell Without a Night” (La Celda sin noche) is the debut play of Irusta, a young playwright, film and theater director born in Bilbao, in 1995.

Irusta tells the story of Abdullah Öcalan's imprisonment, the evolution of his political thought and political proposals. The play deals with the ideas that he developed under heavy isolation.

Instead of a simple oral narrative, the play takes the audience on an emotional journey through narratives reflecting the Kurdish people's Leader, Abdullah Öcalan's own ideological journey.

Artistic freedom of expression alone allows for an innovative representation of what goes on inside a cell. Three characters representing the thinking of Abdullah Öcalan, guide the audience through the intricacies of complete imprisonment and honest political transformation. The audience follows the discussions between these three characters and falls under the spell of the freedom of thought that remains unlimited despite the limitations of the prison.

Although this story is the story of the struggle of the Kurds, Irusta and Gabilondo actually bring a human rights advocacy story to the stage by telling it through the imprisonment and resistance of Kurdish people's Leader Abdullah Öcalan. He sheds light on the possibility of a democratic future in the Middle East, and one that could also have implications for the entire world, if we listen carefully.

"The Cell Without a Night" was developed and selected by the "New Dramaturgies" program (Nuevas Dramaturgias / Antzerkiginzta Berriak) organized by the three municipal theaters of the Basque cities of Bilbo/Bilbao, Donostia/San Sebastian and Gasteiz/Vitoria. The play is a joint production of these three theatres, Antzerkiz and the Costa Rican Ministry of Culture.

The play is brought to the stage by Basque and Costa Rican artists: Mireia Gabilondo (director), Fernando Bernués (scenography and costumes), David Bernués (lights and audiovisuals). The actors are Andres Montero, Noelia Campos and Roberto Bautista. Assistant director Natalia Regidor, sound director Daniel Alarcón. The production team from Costa Rica consists of Rafael Ávalos, Sally Molina and Arlette Arroyo.

The play will be presented in Bilbao on Wednesday 15 March.



More than 2,5 million signatures collected in campaign for Öcalan's freedom

ANF | QAMISHLO | 13 MARCH 2023

The North and East Syria People's Initiative, in coordination with the Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Initiative-Syria, announced in a statement the outcome of the campaign launched on January 22 under the motto "The peoples of North and East Syria call for the removal of the isolation of Öcalan and his physical freedom."

The Kurdish version of the statement was read out by Mihêdî Dixê and the Arabic version by Ahin Eli at the Heysem Kîçe Stadium in Qamishlo.

The statement said: "The people of Damascus, Lebanon and South Kurdistan (North Iraq), as well as North and East Syria, participated in the signature campaign launched on January 22 to demand the

physical freedom of Abdullah Öcalan. A total of 2 million 626 thousand 828 signatures have been collected during the course of the campaign.

The statement urged human rights organizations and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) to respond to the calls and demands of the people. It said: “No news has been received from Öcalan for more than 23 months and the effects of the earthquake on İmralı Island have not been reported.”

After the statement, the list of signatures was handed over to the Freedom for Leader Abdullah Öcalan Initiative to be conveyed to the CPT.

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Prisons in Turkey

Journalists in Amed demand the release of 16 colleagues detained without charge for nine months

ANF | AMED | 9 MARCH 2023

In Turkey, 16 Kurdish media workers have been in pre-trial detention without charge for nine months. Their colleagues called attention to this today in front of the court building in Amed (tr. Diyarbakir). The rally was organised by the Mesopotamia Journalists' Platform (MKGP) and the Dicle Firat Journalists' Association (DFG). Relatives of the detainees and HDP politicians Remziye Tosun, Gülistan Atasoy and Zeyyat Ceylan also took part in the protest.

Those detained are the director of the women's news agency JinNews, Safiye Alagaş, the co-chair of DFG, Serdar Altan, the editor of the Mezopotamya News Agency (MA), Aziz Oruç, two editors of the Kurdish-language newspaper Xwebûn, Mehmet Ali Ertaş and Zeynel Abidin Bulut, the presenter and former MA editor Ömer Çelik, presenters Neşe Toprak and Elif Üngür, cameramen Mazlum Doğan Güler, Ibrahim Koyuncu, Abdurrahman Öncü, Suat Doğuhan, Ramazan Geciken, Lezgin Akdeniz and Mehmet Şahin, and Remziye Temel, accountant of Piya Production. The media workers were arrested on 8 June 2022 in a large-scale operation. During police interrogation, they were accused of being members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). To date, no indictment has been issued.

At Thursday's rally in Amed, a joint statement by the MKGP and DGF was read out in Kurdish and Turkish, denouncing the excessive length of pre-trial detention. The statement said that pro-government media reported after the arrests that the analysis of wiretap transcripts amounting to eighty hours had revealed a link to the PKK. “However, it is obvious that the prosecutor could not establish an organisational link from this and is now looking for other digital documents,” the statement said.

“Our 16 colleagues must be released from pre-trial detention immediately. The nine-month detention period has become imprisonment without sentence. We know that this situation is not independent of the political rulers who have cracked down on people in the run-up to the elections. We appeal to the prosecutors and judges: stop following the orders of the government that exists today and will not exist tomorrow, turn back from this mistake and abandon this unjust and unlawful practice. Do not put journalists on trial just because they do not report in conformity with the government. Release our 16 colleagues immediately and prepare the indictment. The pen of truth must not be twisted by obstruction, arrest, investigation and trial. Journalism cannot be prosecuted,” said spokespersons Cuma Daş and Roza Metina.

The protest ended with the slogan “The free press cannot be silenced”.

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Ill prisoner Nimet Değiş released after 31 years in prison

ANF | 12 MARCH 2023

Ill prisoner Nimet Değiş (65) was held in Kırşehir S Type Closed Prison. He was released after 31 years of imprisonment. The man, who completed his execution in July 2022, remained in prison for 8 months longer because, according to the prison administration, he did not show any sign of regret.

Değiş, who was previously held in Maraş Türkoğlu L Type Closed Prison, was deported to Kırşehir S Type Closed Prison after the earthquake.

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New indictment against HDP politician Semra Güzel

ANF | ISTANBUL | 14 MARCH 2023

Kurdish politician Semra Güzel, imprisoned in Turkey on terror charges, has been charged again - this time with alleged forgery. The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office accuses the 38-year-old politician of using a fake identity document. According to reports, the document was found by the Istanbul police during Güzel's arrest about six months ago. If convicted, the politician faces a prison sentence of between three and seven and a half years.

Semra Güzel has been in pre-trial detention since the beginning of September. The former Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) MP is accused of belonging to the “hierarchy” of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The indictment is based mainly on the statements of an anonymous “prosecution witness” and photos showing Güzel with her former fiancé. The man in question is a guerrilla fighter who lost his life in a Turkish air strike in 2017. The photos were taken in 2014 in a guerrilla camp in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq), when an HDP delegation visited the PKK with state knowledge as part of the peace

process to discuss further steps towards de-escalation. In December, her mandate was revoked in the Turkish parliament. The case against her is pending in Ankara.

The indictment in the so-called fraud case against Güzel, who is a trained medical doctor, has not yet been formally accepted. The 23rd Heavy Penal Court in Istanbul transferred the case to a criminal chamber in Ankara at the beginning of the week due to local non-jurisdiction. The court has not yet decided whether to accept the indictment. However, it is likely that the case will be admitted.

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Military aggression and occupation

HPG: Turkish army continuous its attacks on guerrilla areas

ANF | BEHDINAN

The press centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) released a statement providing information about the recent attacks by the Turkish army in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). According to the statement,

7 March 2023: The invading forces carried out almost eighty attacks on southern Kurdistan on Monday. The targets of the bombardments were guerrilla positions in various regions in the Medya Defense Zones. HPG recorded 79 attacks with howitzers, tanks and other heavy weapons throughout the day.

In Zap, guerrilla positions near the village of Sîda and in Çemço were bombed. Both locations 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.

In Metîna, the area around Girê Ortê was taken under artillery fire. In Xakurke, the Turkish army shelled the Girê Şehîd Kamuran and Girê Şehîd Heqî resistance massifs as well as the area around the Lolan river.

8 March 2023: The invading forces carried out 94 attacks on southern Kurdistan on Tuesday, March 7. In the region of Zap, the Turkish army attacked the guerrilla positions in Sida, facing a response from the guerrillas in an act of self-defense, which left one soldier dead.

On the same day, the Turkish army carried out 93 attacks against guerrilla positions with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons. The attacks were directed against the Girê Ortê area in Metina, Girê Şehîd Kamuran area in Xakurke, as well as the Girê Şehîd Heqî area, the surroundings of the Lolan River and the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sida.

9 March 2023: The invading forces carried out 68 attacks on southern Kurdistan on 8-9 March. According to the HPG, the Turkish army attacked the Girê Cûdî and Girê FM resistance areas, the areas of Girê Ortê and Çarçêl in Metîna and the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sîda with tanks and heavy weapons 68 times.

10 March 2023: The Press Centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) released a statement providing information about the recent attacks by the Turkish army in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). According to the statement, a member of the Turkish occupation forces was killed by guerrillas in the Zap region on March 9 as part of a defensive action in response to the bombardment of guerrilla positions in the Çemço area.

In the region of Metina, Turkish troops attacked the guerrillas in Girê Ortê area with drones loaded with explosives.

On the same day, Turkish jets carried out 6 strikes in Girê Ortê, Girê Amediyê and Girê Bahar resistance areas, as well as the guerrilla positions in Çemço.

The guerrilla positions in Girê Ortê, Çemço and Sîda were attacked 37 times with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons on the same day.

11 March 2023: The Press Centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) released a statement providing information about the recent attacks by the Turkish army in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). According to the statement, the Turkish army carried out 7 bombardments with phosphorus-enriched shells against the guerrilla positions near the village of Sida on March 10.

On the other hand, the area of Gundê Kanîsarkê in Garê and the area of Girê Çarçêl in Metina were shelled 4 times by Turkish fighter jets on March 9 and 10.

HPG also reported that the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sîda, as well as the Girê Cûdî Resistance Area, were shelled 19 times with attack helicopters, howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons on March 10.

12 March 2023: The invading forces carried out 23 attacks on guerrilla areas on 10-11 March. HPG stated that the Turkish army continues its attacks against the guerrilla forces who are maintaining their existing position.

On 10 March, the area of Deştâ Kafya in Garê was shelled twice by fighter jets.

On 11 March, the Girê Cûdî Resistance area and the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sîda were shelled by attack helicopters as well as howitzers, tanks and heavy weaponry 21 times.

13 March 2023: The invading forces carried out 46 attacks on guerrilla areas on 12 March. In the Zap region, Turkish troops attacked the Girê Cûdî Resistance Area, to which guerrillas responded, inflicting a blow on the invaders.

Turkish airstrikes targeted the areas of Girê Çarçêl and Serê Metîna, and the vicinity of the Şelazê village in the Metina region; the area of Geliyê Balinda in Zap and surroundings of the Lolan River in Xakurkê.

The Turkish army carried out a total of 36 attacks with attack helicopters, howitzers, tanks and heavy weaponry against the Girê Cûdî and Girê FM Resistance Areas, and the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sîda.

14 March 2023: The Press Centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) released a statement providing information about the recent attacks by the Turkish army in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

According to the statement, the invading army carried out 93 attacks on guerrilla areas on 13 March.

HPG reported that guerrillas responded to an attack in the Girê Cûdî resistance area and fought back to defend themselves. Prohibited ordnance was used against HPG and YJA Star positions in the Çemço and Sîda areas in the Zap region in two cases. A total of 91 attacks with attack helicopters, mortars, howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons were directed against the surroundings of the Lolan River in Xakurke, the resistance areas Girê Cûdî and Girê FM, as well as against positions in Çemço and Sîda.

Çemço and Sîda 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.

Turkey's attacks continue 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.

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“Kuro Jahro”, a song of resistance in memory of the martyrs

Bêstûn Cultural Centre has released a clip with the song “Kuro Jahro” in memory of the martyrs of the guerrilla resistance against the Turkish occupation attacks on the guerrilla-held Medya Defence Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

A new music clip has been released paying tribute to the resistance of the guerrillas of YJA (Free Women's Troops) and HPG (People's Defence Forces) against the occupation attacks of the Turkish army on the Medya Defence Zones since mid-April 2022.

In the clip commemorating the martyrs of Zap, Metîna and Avaşîn, scenes from the guerrillas' tunnel facilities are shown. At the beginning, a guerrilla fighter can be seen coming out of a tunnel wearing a gas mask and taking out musical instruments from a hiding place. He then performs the resistance song "Kuro Jahro".

The six-minute clip is a work of Bêstûn Cultural Centre, whose focus is art and culture in Rohilat (Eastern Kurdistan). The song is mainly about the Turkish invasion and the guerrilla resistance at Kuro Jahro, a mountain massif in the Zap region.

You can lesson the video music here: <https://anfenglishmobile.com/culture/kuro-jahro-a-song-of-resistance-in-memory-of-the-martyrs-65946>



Sweden presents draft for "tougher terror laws"

ANF | 10 MARCH 2023

Just in time for the resumption of NATO talks with Turkey, Sweden has presented a proposal for tougher terror laws. According to the government's plans, it will be a punishable offence in future to participate in a terrorist organisation or to finance such participation.

Violators could face several years in prison, according to the draft published on Thursday. This is intended to close a loophole in the law. While the parliament must now vote on the law, the amendments are to come into force on 1 June. That would be two weeks after the parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey.

Sweden has been working on tightening its anti-terror laws for years. Sweden's Legislative Council, however, criticised the proposal that has now been introduced, stating that the draft law "cannot be used as a basis for legislation in its present form". Several ambiguous passages were criticized by the Council, saying that the interpretation was too difficult in practice. Moreover, it said, the new law was not even necessary, as many things were already punishable anyway. These include membership in a "terrorist organisation", its financing or the recruitment of new members.

That the draft is coming now is seen as a sign in the NATO dispute with Turkey. After decades of neutrality, Sweden, together with Finland, applied for admission in May last year as a result of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. But Ankara is blocking the admission of the two countries. Sweden is accused of taking insufficient action against "terrorist organisations".

The alleged terrorist organisations are the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the People's Defence Units (YPG) active in northern and eastern Syria. The Turkish government is also demanding that Sweden extradite more than a hundred people who are considered "terrorists" in Turkey. These are mainly opposition members in exile who sought protection from political persecution in Sweden. They were bargaining chips when Ankara demanded concessions from the government in Stockholm in return for the "yes" to the country's accession to NATO.

The list of wanted "terrorists" submitted by Turkey to Sweden also included the name of Mahmut Tat. The asylum-seeking Kurdish activist from Dersim, who has a final sentence of almost seven years in prison in Turkey for alleged PKK membership for taking part in two legal demonstrations, was extradited to Ankara in December. Since his transfer to the Turkish regime authorities, he has been held in a high-security prison near Istanbul.

The talks on the admission of Sweden and Norway to NATO also started again yesterday. After a break of several weeks, negotiators from the three countries met again for the first time in Brussels, as was confirmed by NATO circles. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also took part in the meeting.

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HPG guerrilla: We will fight to the last drop of blood

RONAHI BARAN/AMARA HARUN | BEHDINAN | 12 MARCH 2023

Turkey is continuing the occupation attacks on the guerrilla-held Medya Defence Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) and is resorting to internationally outlawed means of combat in the face of resistance from the guerrilla armies HPG (People's Defence Forces) and YJA Star (Free Women's Troops).

HPG guerrilla Argeş Amed spoke to ANF about the war in Southern Kurdistan, saying:

"I am taking part in the Bazên Zagrosê [Falcons of the Zagros] offensive. As a freedom fighter, I am proud to participate in the campaign. First and foremost, it is important to know that the war in the Medya Defence Zones is not being waged by the Turkish state alone, but with the support of the hegemonic powers. The Turkish attacks that are taking place in the course of the Bazên Zagrosê revolutionary offensive are not ordinary attacks. Different types of prohibited weapons are used against the guerrillas. The guerrillas show a strong will against chemical weapons. It is a historic moment for a guerrilla to fight against the enemy in this war. The Turkish state is failing because of the will of the guerrillas. Therefore, it wants to achieve results in the Medya Defence Zones with chemical weapons. These weapons are internationally banned. This is well known, but obviously does not apply when they are used against the guerrillas. In practice, this is concretely visible. For example, the Şehîd Botan position was attacked hundreds of times with gas and explosives within four days. This is a clear indication of how hard the Turkish state is struggling and that it is suffering defeat against the guerrillas. Turkey wants to get results by using chemical weapons. We saw what resistance means in Siyanê, Werxelê and Zendura in 2021."

Argeş Amed stressed that the resistance continues unabated, saying: “Although the guerrillas have documented the use of banned gas, nothing is being done about it. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has not taken any initiative. Thus, the international states give permission for the use of such weapons. It is a general concept. The guerrillas will always resist it.”

Amed concluded: “The Turkish state, relying on its technical means, wants to gain control over the guerrilla areas, but as we know, this is an illusion. The Turkish army’s losses mean that its defeat is imminent. The Turkish media does not report this, but it is known that the soldiers are coming back to Turkey as corpses. The fascist Turkish army is being defeated by the guerrillas who have a strong will and are fighting for an ideology they believe in. We know that we will win in the end. It is our responsibility to carry the flag taken from our fallen comrades to the mountain tops. For this we will fight to the last drop of blood.”



Nineteen years ago, the Qamishlo Uprising

ANF | 12 MARCH 2023

On 12 March 2004, nine people were killed when clashes erupted at a football match in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishlo between supporters of a local team and those of an Arab team based in Deir ez-Zor.

The following day, mourners at the funeral procession for the victims chanted anti-Bashar al-Assad slogans and raised Kurdish flags.

Syrian security forces opened fire, killing 23 people and sparking days of protests and rioting in northern Syria’s Kurdish regions (Heseke, Kobane, Afrin) as well as Kurdish-majority neighborhoods of Aleppo and Damascus.

Kurds reacted from Afrin to Dêrik in protest at the attack against the uprising in Qamishlo and against the state repression.

The state was trying to create enmity among the peoples, seeking to create strife between the Kurdish and Arab people. Yet the Baath regime was not successful in this policy. The Qamishlo uprising sowed the seeds of a new era for the Kurds.

The Kurds established their unions and started to develop a new idea. It thus became clear that the Kurds needed a defense force, administration and organization. Contrary to what the state had planned to achieve with this massacre, hostility between the Kurdish and Arab peoples did not develop, nor did the chauvinistic feelings the state hoped to create.

It is often said that the Qamishlo uprising lit the first spark of the Rojava revolution. The “Serhildan of Qamishlo” is considered to be the first mass uprising in Rojava. The revolts were crushed by al-Assad forces but the Syrian regime was forced to recognize Kurds.



Eartquake in North Kurdistan

Environmental organizations call for annulment of Erdogan's decree to “rebuild” earthquake zones

ANF | 7 MARCH 2023

Following the earthquakes in 11 provinces in Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria, Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan issued Decree No. 126, which confers extraordinary powers to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate for the reconstruction of earthquake zones, barring all kinds of public inspections. The ecology and environmental organizations issued a statement to demand the annulment of the decree.

The ecology and environment organizations stated that the earthquake disaster was caused by the corruption policy of the government and added: “We know that our country is located in an earthquake zone. We know that every province of our country has zoning plans and before these zoning plans are made, geological survey reports of the areas to be planned should be prepared. We know that in our country, ground and foundation work should be done before construction where each building is made by obtaining a construction permit. Despite all we know, the transformation of natural events into disasters is the result of behaving according to profit and benefit, not according to scientific and ecological principles and social benefit.”

Ecology Organizations drew attention to the fact that this decree was prepared with the same profit logic and that a construction program was planned to be implemented in the region with this understanding, and underlined the following points:

- Authorities related to the construction of cities are centralized in a single hand and given to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change.
- The proceedings cannot be objected to, public participation will not be ensured in any way, judicial review will be prevented, and the judiciary will be emptied of its powers.
- The ground will be prepared for new disasters with site selections made without data such as relevant institution opinions and detailed analyses that will be the basis for the planification work.
- In all provinces in the earthquake zone, forest and pasture areas will be opened for construction without any obstacles. Natural areas, which are the livelihoods of citizens who mostly live on agriculture, will also be drowned in concrete.

- The type of project buildings produced by a central decision-making process from the top, without the participation of the public, will be produced and destroyed once again.
- It will cause irreparable damage to living spaces, natural and cultural assets through hasty decisions, which disables planning, limits the right to property.
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- It will cause irreparable damage to living spaces, natural and cultural assets through hasty decisions, which disables planning, limits the right to property.”

Call to opposition parties

The statement called on opposition parties that have a group in the Parliament "for this decree, which contains clear violations of the Constitution and the law, to be brought to the Constitutional Court quickly with a request for annulment. All democratic organizations and parties fighting for labor, ecology and citizens' rights should be united in the struggle against such unlawfulness and reckless plan.”

The ecology organizations that signed the call are as follows: "Adana Ecology Platform, Artur Environment Platform, Bakırtepe Environment Platform, Büyük Menderes Initiative, Çekerek River, Özgür Akacak Platform, Chamber of Environmental Engineers, DİSK, Giant Yapı-İş, Divriği Life and Nature Platform, Ecology Union , Gaia Magazine, Climate Justice Coalition, Kuşadası Environment Platform, Mesopotamia Ecology Movement, Muğla Environment Platform, Munzur Environment Association, Polen Ecology Collective, Struggle Against Samandağ WPP, Turgutlu Workers' Rights Association Ecology Commission, Umut-Sen, Validebağ Volunteers, Van Environmental History Artifacts Conservation Research and Development Association, Earth Ecology Collective, Green Left Climate Crisis Working Group, Yeşilirmak Environment Platform."

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Authorities want to remove people's solidarity areas

ANF | HATAY | 7 MARCH 2023

Following the removal of Sevgi Park in Hatay, the solidarity areas in Serinyol in Antakya district are also at risk of being removed.

Purple Solidarity members made a statement in Serinyol, to protest the evacuation. Yaren Esin from Purple Solidarity underlined that a month has passed since the earthquake and said: "It is the first month of the massacre that took place because of the capitalist patriarchal state and the government. 'Where is the state?' While there are threats and swearing in response to the question, we are with women as always."

‘We shake the chairs of those neglecting people’

Esin said that they will expand the struggle by organizing neighbourhoods, and added: “There is a housing, thirst and livelihood crisis on our agenda. We shake the seats of those neglecting people. They are afraid of our common unity and fighting. That’s why they want people to leave the areas they have established together.”

‘We will build free cities’

Protesting to the attempts to evacuate the solidarity areas in Serinyol after Sevgi Park, Esin said: “Your threats and pressure did and will not intimidate us. We will continue to fight until we build free cities.”

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Earthquake exposes corruption in Turkey’s health system

ANF | HATAY | 7 MARCH 2023

The massive destruction caused by the Maraş-centred earthquake has showed that Turkey’s health system, much-praised by the AKP-MHP government, is corrupted. In the first days of the earthquake, search and rescue teams could not arrive in the earthquake-hit cities and the Ministry of Health failed to respond to injured citizens.

A volunteer health worker, who has been helping the injured and traumatized citizens since the first days of the earthquake, told ANF about the shortcomings caused by the earthquake that occurred one month ago.

“Health ministry failed to respond to earthquake”

The volunteer health worker stated that many health workers went to the earthquake-hit area voluntarily with no assignment by the Ministry of Health, which rejected the requests by health workers to help the survivors.

He said: “We have been here since the first day of the earthquake. The Health Ministry has not been active. Most of the hospitals here were heavily damaged, and many of our colleagues died. Surviving colleagues were either helping their relatives under the rubble or they were injured. But the Ministry was doing nothing to help the survivors. We wanted to come to the area voluntarily after we heard about the earthquake from the surrounding provinces. Some of our friends requested the Ministry to go to the area. Most of the assignments were rejected, while our friends who were assigned waited for 22 hours for a plane that was supposed to land at Adana airport. After the Adana airport, they waited for 10 hours, then the authorities started to send our friends to the areas selected randomly.

The volunteer health worker revealed that the health workers who were not assigned by the ministry or who did not ask permission from the ministry, came to the area by their own means. He added that they arrived in Hatay province on the third day of the earthquake.

He remarked: “People and volunteers were trying to reach here at a time when there was a lack of coordination. When we came to the city, we realized that neither the Ministry of Health nor the Ministry of Interior and state-run AFAD were involved in rescue operations and relief efforts. The volunteer said that soldiers dispatched to the area were not experienced in the search and rescue efforts.

“People pulled their relatives from debris on their own”

The volunteer pointed out that the people tried to remove their relatives who were under the wreckage with the cranes they found with their own efforts. He said that volunteers like him established relations with the survivors and helped them.

He added that state-run rescue organization AFAD launched rescue efforts only in certain buildings that collapsed after the earthquake.

“Electricity was not provided, portable toilets came late”

The volunteer said that there is no concern about a major epidemic at the moment as a result of the work they have done in the region through their own means, yet this does not mean that current circumstances may not lead to major epidemics.

He said: “There is no epidemic under the current conditions, but some cases of scabies have been reported here. Lice have also become very common. The villages have been overpopulated due to the poor sheltering, which led to an increase in upper respiratory tract infections. Children are especially affected by it. We have reported vaginal infections and vaginal fungal infections due to failures in access to toilets and showers in villages where electricity is not provided consciously so that people can leave. Yet, we cannot talk about major outbreaks currently in the earthquake-hit areas.

The health worker said that they observed a lack of organization, adding that if the measures are not taken quickly, huge epidemics may soon erupt. He remarked: “Toilet waste goes to the Orontes River, which may cause epidemics later.”

“Traumatized health workers forced to work”

The volunteer concluded: “The Health Ministry has forced the traumatized and quake-survivor health workers to work in the area for the last two days. This is not an ethical situation. While we are trying to protect our colleagues here, making sure that they do not stay here for more than seven days, the Health Ministry should not keep them busy here.”

Syrian refugees in Elbistan forcibly removed from tent city

ANF | ELBİSTAN | 9 MARCH 2023

Ten Syrian families are forcibly removed from the tent city, which was established for earthquake victims in the Cumhuriyet Mahallesi in the city of Elbistan. More than 30 families reside in the tent city. A large number of police and soldiers were sent to the tent city area to look for the Syrian refugees, who were ordered to leave the tents on the grounds that there were complaints about them.

Since the wives of two of the refugees were Turkish, two families were allowed to stay, while the remaining 8 families were forcibly evicted. It was stated that the Syrians will be settled in the tent city established in the Elbistan National Garden.

It was noteworthy that the police did not come to the tent city on Tuesday, despite residents denounced a man who used violence against his wife and child in the very same tent city. On Wednesday, police came in large numbers to remove the refugees from the area.

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Journalist Fırat Bulut taken into custody upon his return from the earthquake zone

ANF | ANKARA | 10 MARCH 2023

Journalist Fırat Bulut was taken into custody in Ankara upon his return from the earthquake zone. Bulut announced his detention on Twitter. He wrote that an investigation was launched against him by the Bingöl Criminal Court of Peace on the charge of “publicly spreading false information”.

Bulut wrote: “I have been reporting from the earthquake zone for a month. I was detained in Ankara Es-enboğa, this evening. Bingöl Magistrate’s Office opened an investigation against me for spreading false information. They were not present in the earthquake area. They are trying to silence me with an investigation. #GazetecilikSucDegildir.”

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Front Line Defenders concerned about violence against human rights defenders in earthquake regions

ANF | 10 MARCH 2023

Front Line Defenders said in a statement that it “is deeply concerned about the reports of violence, legal harassment, arbitrary arrests and threats against human rights defenders in the regions affected by the devastating earthquake in Turkey and calls Turkish authorities to not obstruct their work. Human rights defenders who were perceived as criticising the government are specifically targeted by security forces on the ground.”

The statement added: “Many journalists on the ground reported that they were stopped by security forces while trying to cover news and were threatened by officials not to report anything that would undermine the government.”

Front Line Defenders reminds the Turkish authorities of the article 1 of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid which states “Humanitarian aid is a fundamental expression of the universal value of solidarity between people and a moral imperative”. The Consensus also emphasises that “the ‘humanitarian space’ that is needed to ensure access to vulnerable populations and the safety and security of humanitarian workers must be preserved as essential preconditions for the delivery of humanitarian aid”.

Front Line Defenders urges the Turkish government to ensure a safe and enabling working environment for human rights defenders who have been tirelessly working in the region since the first day of the earthquake and to stop the targeting of them as a result of their legitimate work in the defence of human rights. Security forces and officials must allow all human rights defenders and volunteers to continue their work to deliver the necessary and life-saving goods and services to survivors. Human rights defenders should be able to document and report the developments on the ground without fear of violence and arrests.

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Danger of dust clouds in Hatay

ANF | HATAY | 11 MARCH 2023

Large clouds of dust are formed during rubble removal in Hatay, one of the cities hit by the earthquake last 6 February. The rubble is deposited in creek beds. Climate activist Melis Tantan warns of damage to health and criticizes the state’s lack of planning.

One month after the earthquake catastrophe in the Turkish-Syrian border area, people in the affected region are faced with new health and other problems due to the removal of rubble. In Hatay, the clean-up work started twenty days after the earthquake. The Turkish state is ignoring the recommendations of

health organizations, which have repeatedly pointed out possible health problems during rubble clearance. Because no safety precautions were taken and action was haphazard, the villages are shrouded in a cloud of dust.

Melis Tantan from the Coordination Office for Climate and Justice warned about the fact that the dust clouds will cause permanent damage to health. “This lack of planning is actually a crime. It is a crime that affects the health of the population and all living beings. During clearance operations, there must be designated disposal areas for the debris. The places where the rubble is taken are actually crime scenes.”

Lack of planning at every stage

Tantan noted that it was a government policy to begin demolition work as soon as possible and defines the process as follows: “The urgency to clear the rubble as soon as possible is causing a great number of problems. This lack of planning began before the earthquake, continued afterwards with the rescue work and care for the earthquake victims, and is continuing now during the clearing operations. The lack of planning will also continue during reconstruction. There is a chain of irregularities. There is a lack of planning at every stage.”

The consequences will last for generations

The lack of planning poses a public health problem, said Tantan, adding: “Environmental organisations, asbestos disposal experts, non-governmental organisations, labor and professional organizations should have been consulted, but this did not happen. Asbestos is dangerous and affects generations. You can't see it in the dust, it's like a hidden disease. The consequences will only become apparent years later. Doctors also speak of a cancer risk, and who knows what we are breathing here. There is not only asbestos, because other toxic substances have also been released. All the people living here and the volunteers who have been here since the earthquake are at risk of suffering from health issues. A month has passed, and people have breathed in this dust. In the future we will see the consequences of this lack of planning.”



The pain of a mother: My son's body was thrown in the street

ZEYNEP KURAY | HATAY | 11 MARCH 2023

The body of 15-year-old Ali Nasır Mullaoglu, who died in the earthquake in Hatay Training and Research Hospital, was thrown from the morgue to the street. The hospital came onto the agenda with the scandal of leaving the patients in the intensive care unit to die after the earthquake. Speaking to ANF, Eser Mullaoglu said: “No one has the right to throw my son's body on the street.”

Eser Mullaoglu, a mother of three, living in Hatay, lost her 15-year-old son in the earthquake on 6 February 2023. Mullaoglu could not hold back her tears while describing what happened that night. She said: “During the earthquake, I took my son out. I asked him to wait there. While he was on his way to save his brothers, a pile of concrete fell on his head. He died on the spot. The *Mukhtar* put him in the car and took

him to the morgue of Hatay Training and Research Hospital. He told me to take the body from there. Hours later, I sent a relative to the hospital. However, when he got there, he immediately called me and informed me that my son's body had been thrown on the street. I went to the hospital and found my son's body in the street.”

Mullaoglu said that her son's body was left in a trunk for days, wrapped in a blanket. Stating that her husband was abroad at the time of the earthquake and that he came as soon as he heard the news, the mother said that they buried their son by their own means. Mullaoglu said: “No one has the right to throw my son's body in the street. We're talking about a 15-year-old boy. If my relative had not gone to the hospital that day, we would not have known what had happened to my son. Where would I look for my son? Is this justice? They put the bodies in body bags and took pictures.”

When asked whether she would file a criminal complaint, she replied: “Who are we going to complain to?”



Earthquake survivor: We don't want to leave our cities

ANF | ANTEP | 11 MARCH 2023

The people of Nurdağı do not want to leave their land and culture. They want a solution to be found for them as soon as possible.

80 percent of the Nurdağı, in Antep (Dilok), one of the cities most affected by the two February earthquakes, was destroyed. The city has a population of 42,000 and many people migrated after the earthquake, while the rest are trying to hold on despite great difficulties. Earthquake survivor Hüsne Kılıç spoke to ANF about her experiences.

She said that after the earthquake they had to continuously change places and added: “We went to the vineyard house, we stayed in the tent, we slept in the car. We are always outside. Our children fell ill because of the cold.”

Kılıç said that they had lost many neighbours and friends in the earthquake, and added: “Most of my daughter's friends died. In the first days, we only had some blankets to keep us warm. I don't want to leave my city. Even if I had to stay in a tent, I would not go from here. They say that Nurdağı will be completely emptied. But I don't want to leave here. I have no tears left. We do not want to leave our land, because we were born in this place. We do not want to migrate to another place. The government should find a solution to this situation as soon as possible.”



AFAD says death toll from earthquakes rose to 47,975

ANF | 11 MARCH 2023

Tens of thousands of people lost their lives and hundreds of thousands were injured in the earthquakes that shook Kurdistan and Turkey at 8-hour intervals on 6 February. The epicenters of the earthquakes were in Pazarcik (7.8 magnitude) and Elbistan (7.7 magnitude), in the province of Maraş.

Yunus Sezer, Chair of Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, announced on Saturday that the death toll has risen to 47,975. The victims include 6,278 foreigners, he added.

According to Sezer, around 1 million and 800 thousand people are staying in tent cities and containers in the earthquake region.

The earthquake victims have been saying that Turkish state institutions do not provide support and assistance. So much so that some people lost their lives due to hypothermia (decreased body temperature) due to the inadequacies of the Turkish state. According to official statements, there is a terrible inconsistency in the numbers of destroyed buildings and the number of dead and injured. And this inconsistency brings a question to mind: "Is the balance sheet of those who lost their lives hidden?"

According to the information obtained by an unnamed source from the AKP one month ago, the number of people who lost their lives in the earthquake is much higher than the official statements. According to the information provided by the AKP official, the death toll is over 150,000.

The same source said that the Turkish Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu called the provincial and district governorships of the earthquake area and instructed that the debris be removed as soon as possible. When the civil authorities said: "There are still people under the debris. How do we clear them without removing people?", Soylu allegedly insisted on the instruction to load the debris on trucks and transport it from the earthquake zones. However, it was stated that some of the civil authorities took the work slowly because there could be dead or injured people in the wrecks.

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‘The state, which provided no help after the earthquake, is now selling houses to survivors’

ANF | ANTEP | 12 MARCH 2023

Babile Koşmaz, who survived the Maraş-centered earthquake on 6 February in her house in Antep, spoke to ANF about her experiences during and after the devastating disaster.

Koşmaz and her family took shelter in a container. She said they were lucky, compared to most people, as thousands were left out in the cold.

“We could not leave the house during the quake. When we went out after the quake finally ended, we saw everyone out on the streets. For two days, we stayed in a building under construction. Then we took shelter in a container of an acquaintance. It was very crowded. We slept on chairs, and we warmed ourselves with heaters. I am originally from Maraş and many of my relatives lost their lives. Our house did not collapse, and it was classified as ‘slightly damaged’, although there are cracks on all the walls, including a very deep one in my daughter’s room. We will return to our house, but we do not know how we will get in,” she said.

The woman highlighted the fact that they did not receive any aid from the state. “We could not even find bread. Later, a bakery in a village began to distribute four breads for each family. There was no food either. Many did not even find a place for shelter. It was very cold. It rained, snowed and a storm broke out. It was very cold on the first day of the earthquake. There was no fuel for those who wanted to stay in their cars. Natural gas was cut off, and there was no water. People were left without water and out in the cold. We went through very hard times.”

Koşmaz pointed out that women were affected more than everyone else, adding: “The lack of toilets was our biggest problem. There was also a major problem with access to hygiene materials. We had to enter damaged houses to be able to change our clothes or go to the toilet. My elder sister is staying in a tent now. Many have been left out in the cold. The state provided no help.”

Commenting on the state’s plan to sell houses to survivors without homes with a 20-year payment plan, Koşmaz said: “People can hardly buy a house after years of work and labor. Those who lost their houses will be sold new houses now. People have lost everything they had. How are they supposed to pay for new houses now?”



Dr. Binboğa warns of increase in diseases in earthquake regions

ANF | 13 MARCH 2023

Earthquake Coordination Center in Samandağ, in the province of Hatay, members of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) and the Health and Social Service Workers' Union (SES) made a statement about the health problems in the province. Dr. Mehmet Binboğa stated that there are problems with accessing toilets and clean water in Samandag. Bingoğa warned that “dozens of diseases, especially diarrhoea, lice, fleas, fungal diseases and scabies, can reach epidemic proportions. The public health problems that this situation will create will be very serious.”

‘This is a public health threat’

Binboğa said: “We warn and we want to remind everyone that these needs should be met urgently, because people should be able to meet their basic needs in healthier and dignified conditions. Clean drinking and utility water needs should be met right now and permanent solutions should be found for the regions hit by the earthquake.”



Damascus government blocks aid from Sulaymaniyah

ANF | 13 MARCH 2023

The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) announced that the Damascus government blocked delivery of aid sent from Sulaymaniyah to the earthquake victims in the region.

According to the AANES statement on its website, the trucks sent by the people of Sulaymaniyah to the earthquake victims in Shehba, Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah have been obstructed by the Syrian regime forces for six days.

The statement said that 25 trucks of aid supplies were enabled to access the Tahiyah border crossing by AANES six days ago, but the Damascus government has not approved their passage through the border crossing yet.

“In February, 100 tankers of fuel oil, prepared by AANES for Shehba and Aleppo, were obstructed by the Damascus government for 9 days and half of it was then confiscated,” said AANES.



Earthquake survivor in Hatay: ‘Even if I die, I can’t leave here’

ANF | HATAY | 14 MARCH 2023

Earthquake survivor Servet Bacanak is currently residing in a tent he himself set up in the Elektrik neighborhood in Hatay province, which was devastated by the recent series of earthquakes in February.

In an interview with ANF, Bacanak said that after he rescued his family members from the earthquake rubble, he went to his parents’ house for help, but both were trapped under the rubble. Bacanak remarked that no rescue team came to the street for the first four days. He said: “I made a sound to find those under the wreckage, yet no one replied. Mom and dad had died. We pulled them 8 days after the earthquake.

Then I decided to stay here. Neighbours come sometimes. I don't want to leave here because I have nowhere to go."

Bacanak noted that his wife and children left the city on the third day to settle in a dormitory, but he stayed. He continued: "There is no single person left here, I am like a guard for the neighbourhood, I feed the animals. I am waiting to find some pictures of my parents under the rubble when they come to demolish the damaged houses."

The man said that he used a device for his health issues and asked policemen for help to provide electricity. He remarked: "I can't sleep properly anymore. I haven't been able to use the device for a month. I asked policemen to provide electricity for the device. If I don't use it, I'll die, but they replied, 'go and talk to the head of police'. How will I see their superior, who is in Ankara?"

Bacanak stated that only volunteers came to help the earthquake survivors. He added: "It is very difficult to be alone, yet I can't make it outside the neighbourhood. My neighbours have died. Some survivors left and the remaining are buried somewhere. This is a very difficult situation, but even if I die, I cannot leave here."



Femicide

Chain poisoning kills four more school kids in Iran

ANF | 7 MARCH 2023

Hundreds of students have been poisoned in a suspicious manner by the successive chemical gas attacks that started in the cities of Iran and Rojhilat (Iranian) Kurdistan since November 30. The attacks mostly targeted girls' schools in 33 cities of the country.

As there is no reliable information about who carried out the attacks and the chemicals used, it is reported that at least a thousand students have been poisoned in the attacks. Most recently, a new chemical attack killed 4 more children, including a student named Karin Alamdari.

Public backlash

The people of Mahabad have reacted to the increasing cases of poisoning in schools recently. Protestors set up barricades and made bonfires, calling for more support for the demonstrations.

After students at Saba Girls' School in the Gogtepe district of Mahabad were poisoned, many schools decided to finish classes an hour earlier than usual.



YPJ: We will fight for ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ to resonate everywhere

ANF | 7 MARCH 2023

The General Command of the Women’s Defense Units (YPJ) made a written statement to mark 8 March, International Women’s Day.

The YPJ statement released on Tuesday is as follows:

“In our 10th year, we once again welcome 8 March International Women’s Day. We have always stated that we would be a force for women’s rights and freedom. On the occasion of 8 March, we reiterate our promise and secure all the values achieved with the blood of martyrs. We commemorate all the women who sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom and women’s freedom.

The earthquakes that struck North Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria have caused great suffering, which was primarily suffered by mothers, women and children and claimed the lives of countless people, and left thousands of others injured and homeless.

Mothers, women and children died, thousands others remain victims, injured and orphans. This year, we welcome 8 March with grief. This earthquake has revealed once again the fact that the system's policies only favour interests and cause pain to grow.

‘People should improve their defense everywhere’

The policies of the system turned the days of people and women into darkness, grievance and pain, proving that the system has never been able to protect peoples. If people do not improve their defence organization in all fields, they will always remain under the rubble of the systems. In the century we live in, there have been great wars and destruction. And all this is a consequence of the male-dominated state system.

On the other hand, women have proven that they can successfully fulfil all their duties by reaching a level of consciousness to take responsibility. In particular, the slogan ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ [Woman, Life, Freedom] has brought the women’s revolution of the world into view. The continuous popularity of this slogan has raised the belief that women have the power to intervene.

As the YPJ, we share the pain of women, and we declare that we are the defenders of the cause of social justice, democratic politics and freedom. We will stand up for social values and will fight for ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ to resonate everywhere.

‘We salute the freedom guerrillas’

In the meantime, we salute the stance of YJA Star and freedom guerrillas who carry out a unique struggle against chemical weapons attacks of the invading Turkish state in the mountains of Kurdistan. We feel it

in our hearts and minds. The pro-woman struggle of the YJA Star guerrillas has been a unique example and source of inspiration.

We celebrate March 8 in the fighting spirit of YJA Star guerrillas and women in Rojhilatê (East) Kurdistan. Women's liberation will become universal under the leadership of Kurdish women. We promise all women that we will protect our historical values and increase the struggle. We will defend our mission and make the women's revolution successful under the motto 'Jin Jiyan Azadi'."

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YJŞ marks International Women's Day: "We will expand our organization"

ANF | SHENGAL | 7 MARCH 2023

The Shengal Women's Units (YJŞ) congratulated all its comrades, female guerrillas, Yazidi, Kurdish, Arab, Shiite and Assyrian women and women all over the world on the occasion of 8 March.

In a written statement marking International Women's Day, YJŞ said: "Violence against women has increased unprecedentedly in recent years. The struggle of women against this mentality will be the main pillar of women's revolution. Welcoming 8 March under the current conditions is very meaningful for us women, as much as it is difficult."

The statement continued: "The steps taken for women's revolution under the leadership of women and the campaign 'We march to women's revolution with 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi' are of great importance to us. Women protect their rights through self-defence. They resist all forms of violence, the sexist mentality and the sovereign states.

We, Yazidi women, have experienced many pains and challenges. Not only have our comrades and brothers Pîr Çeko, Agir Cefri and Şêrzad Shemo been martyred recently, but also many of our citizens have lost their lives in earthquakes. We therefore welcome this day with great sadness.

However, as we recognize its meaning, 8 March will be an oath of vengeance and anger of resistance rather than a celebration for us. The endeavors of all our martyrs will be a spark of freedom for us. We will march on this path with commitment, will and courage.

As the YJŞ and Yazidi women, we vow to enhance the campaign 'We march to women's revolution with 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi!'. Our struggle will ensure freedom and a free life with Leader Öcalan. We will stand together against all forms of violence and expand our organization through our struggle and the self-defence awareness of all women."

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Protests against chemical attacks targeting schoolgirls in Iran and Rojhilat increase

ANF | 8 MARCH 2023

Teachers in Iran have taken to the streets to protest chemical attacks targeting schoolgirls.

20 prominent Iranian lawyers and human rights advocates have, in a joint letter, called on the World Health Organization, UNESCO and UNICEF to form an independent joint committee to immediately visit Iran and probe into the serial poisoning of schoolgirls.

In the last three months, there have been a series of chemical attacks against at least 38 girls' schools in at least 12 Kurdish and Iranian cities.

The first case of pupils being poisoned was reported on November 30, at Noor Girls' School in Qom's Yazdانشahr neighbourhood. At least 18 children were poisoned in the attack.

Since then, attacks have been reported in at least 37 other schools in the cities of Qom, Tehran, Ardabil, Kermanshah, Qazvin, Boroujerd, Isfahan, Torbat Jam, Quchan, Vardanjan and Sari, the latest of which was reported on 28 February.

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Syrian Democratic Council celebrates International Working Women's Day

ANF | 8 MARCH 2023

The Syrian Democratic Council (MSD) celebrated 8 March, International Working Women's Day, with a written statement addressed to all women in the world.

The statement said that 8 March is celebrated thanks to the invaluable sacrifices of women, and added that women continue to fight for their freedom and rights. "The struggle of Syrian women is an example of the continuation of this women's journey towards freedom," added the statement.

The MSD called on "all women to stand up for their achievements, to struggle in unity and solidarity in order to protect their rights and regain their freedom."

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PJAK: Chain poisoning of schoolgirls in Iran is a planned and biological attack

ANF | 8 MARCH 2023

In a statement concerning the latest poisoning attacks in East Kurdistan and Iran, the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) announced its support for the protest actions.

The PJAK statement on Wednesday said that the poisoning attacks that have targeted schoolgirls since last December meant that the Iranian regime declared a war on society and women.

“The incidents experienced under the guise of poisoning are nothing but the Iranian regime’s effort to revenge itself on women and society. Through these attacks, the fascist regime wants to intimidate the whole society and suppress the ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ (Woman, Life, Freedom) uprising,” PJAK said.

“The regime seeks to normalise the chain poisoning, which is a planned attack against women. Society and students’ families should not expect anything from the security institutions of the regime forces, since these institutions themselves are partners in these attacks. Under dictatorial and fascist regimes, society can only defend itself.”

Defining the serial poisoning as a biological attack, PJAK expressed their support for the protests against these attacks.

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Tens of thousands of women celebrate 8 March in Rojava

ANF | 8 MARCH 2023

Actions and events to mark the International Women's Day have taken place in Qamishlo, Kobanê, Manbij, Raqqa, Tabqa and Aleppo on Wednesday. Women took to the streets chanting the slogans “Towards a Women’s Revolution” and “Jin Jiyan Azadi (Woman, Life, Freedom).”

Qamishlo canton

While the march in Qamishlo kicked off at the Syriac Martyrs Junction, women in Amude started their march at Martyr Cihad Square and a third group in front of the Kongra Star Headquarters in Tîrbespiye.

Women in Çilaxa, Girkê Legê, Til Koçer, Dêrik and Til Hemis also took to the streets to celebrate the day.

Kobane

Women came together in the woodland in the city centre of Kobanê and performed the traditional halay dance. Then they marched towards the Jarablus road.

Manbij

Thousands of men and women joined the march which started in front of the Euphrates Hospital towards Wadi Street.

Aleppo

The women's march in Aleppo started in front of the headquarters of the Syrian Revolutionary Youth Movement in the self-governing neighborhood of Şêxmeqsûd (Sheikh Mawsoud). The women dressed in traditional Kurdish clothes joined the march with posters of female martyrs who fell in battle.

Tabqa

Hundreds of women participated in the march in Tabqa. The march, also attended by members of military and civilian institutions, families of martyrs and political parties, started in the first neighbourhood.

Raqqa

Hundreds of women, members of military and civilian institutions, families of martyrs and political party members joined the march in Raqqa.

Women carried pictures of female martyrs and Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan and banners reading "Life grows beautiful with women's resistance" and "We will defeat terrorism" during the march that kicked off from the Panorama Junction in the southwest of Raqqa.



SMJÊ: We salute the resistance of women worldwide

ANF | 8 MARCH 2023

The Umbrella Organisation of the Yazidi Women's Councils (SMJÊ) released a statement on the occasion of 8 March, International Women's Day, saying the following:

"Today belongs to all women who fight for life. This day belongs to those who have been on the streets worldwide for centuries demanding equal participation in life. It belongs to the women who have been ripped from life at the hands of patriarchy. To the women who transform suffering into strength and strength into struggle. This day belongs to the women who tirelessly give their voice to millions of other women and girls.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, we salute the resistance of women worldwide and send our greetings especially to Iran and Shengal, where women are putting up historic resistance against patriarchy and thus defending life and freedom. At the same time, we remember all the courageous women, such as Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Sakine Cansiz and Berivan, who dedicated their lives to the liberation of women and humanity.

Today, 8 March, is not about pretty flowers and presents, but about essential political and historical struggles. International Women's Struggle Day now looks back on more than 110 years of history. Today, we want to draw attention to the importance of these historical achievements. International Women's Struggle Day should remind us of the immense suffering that women and girls around the world endure every day. In modern times, enslavement, exploitation and violence have intensified. In our present reality, which is dominated by a male-dominated mindset, sexual abuse, forced prostitution, suicide, child marriage, female infanticide and domestic violence have also taken a form of daily practice. Economic, political, social, cultural, ecological and many other problems are therefore concentrated in the women's question. In response, the 21st century has seen an increase in organised resistance by women worldwide.

We salute today the great resistance of women in Iran and Eastern Kurdistan (Rojhilat) who have been leading the historic protests against the murderous Mullah regime for months, shaking the misogynist Islamist regime and risking their lives every day. Our greetings today also go to the brave women in Rojava who daily resist the attacks of Turkey and ISIS on their lives and are architects of a free life. We also remember today the women who lost their lives in the devastating earthquake. We remember the still ongoing feminicide and genocide of the Yazidis in 2014 by ISIS, in the course of which more than 5,000 Yazidi women and girls were abducted, enslaved, raped and tortured. To date, well over 1,000 women and girls are still in the clutches of ISIS.

The struggle of women worldwide is expanding far and wide. Women don't want flowers. They want to live! To live without being afraid. They want their no to be accepted. They demand equal participation in life. They want to shape their own lives! We can only achieve an end to this patriarchal violence by building a strong women's organisation, through international solidarity among women and our own self-defence structures. We want to advance this awareness and solidarity among women in order to jointly confront the attacks on our lives and our right to self-determination.

Let us strengthen our solidarity and, as women who liberate themselves, take responsibility for building a free society! Together for freedom - Every day is 8 March!"

— ★ —

Feminist Night March in Istanbul banned

ANF | 8 MARCH 2023

The Beyoğlu District Governor's Office has banned the 21st Feminist Night March in İstanbul's Taksim to mark International Women's Day, Bianet reported on Wednesday.

The demonstration might cause an uproar among a section of the public, considering the social media messages about the event, the office said in a written statement.

Also, “verbal, physical and provocative” attacks involving the demonstrators and other groups might occur during the event, it said. Such incidents would endanger public order and national security, according to the statement.

Earlier in the day, the police placed barricades on streets leading to İstiklal Avenue, where the demonstration was planned to take place. In response, the organizers of the march said they would defy the ban as they did in the past several years.

“March 8 cannot be banned! Our Feminist Night March, which began in 2003 with nearly 100 women, has grown steadily despite all the oppression, bans and obstructions. As every year, we’ll be on the streets to fill the squares and give each other strength this year!”

“Against the patriarchy, capitalism, the profiteering system you rely on, heterosexism, transphobia, racism, nationalism, religious oppression, exploitation, impoverishment, imprisonment, borders-sieges, war, and male-state violence, we’ll continue to be on the streets with our revolt.”

“Just as every year, we’re going to be in Taksim at 19.30 to fill the squares, give strength to each other and take to the streets.”

— ★ —

Yazidi and Arab women march in Shengal

ANF | SHENGAL | 8 MARCH 2023

The Yazidi Women’s Freedom Movement (TAJÊ) organised a march in the Yazidi town of Shengal (Sinjar) on Wednesday to mark 8 March, International Women’s Day.

Hundreds of Yazidi and Arab women attended the march vowing to “avenge thousands of women abducted by ISIS” during the genocidal onslaught on their hometown in August 2014.

Speaking after the march, TAJÊ Coordination Member Riham Hiço said: “We have been oppressed and subjected to atrocities for the past five years. Yazidi women are known for their resistance throughout history. The Yazidi faith attaches importance to the resistance of women. Dozens of Yazidi women have led this society with great heroic deeds.”

Speaking in the name of young women, Sara Botan said, “We, Yazidi women, welcome 8 March with great anger. We promise to avenge thousands of women who were abducted and fell into the captivity of mercenaries.”

— ★ —

Koma Martyr Avesta Xabûr Group dedicates new song to women fighters around the world

ANF | 9 MARCH 2023

Koma Martyr Avesta Xabûr Group released its song Gul Bişkuvî on 8 March and dedicated it to women fighters around the world.

The video was prepared by the Rojava Film Commune and Hîlala Zêrîn Women's Movement.

The lyrics of the song are by Sîdar Amargî, and the music by Mihemed Bilko.

You can watch the video from this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU9UcgIgyg&t=153s>

— ★ —

KJAR: Women dealt a great blow to Iranian state with the Jin, Jiyan, Azadi revolution

RUHEYV BOTAN / AVAN SILVAN | 10 MARCH 2023

Rojhilat Free Women's Association (KJAR) member Peyman Viyan spoke to ANF on the occasion of 8 March International Working Women's Day.

Celebrating the 8 March of all women, Peyman Viyan said: "We salute the works developed with great struggle and creativity all over the world for 8 March. Women send the message that they will not bow to the power and male-dominated mentality no matter what. They once again showed how determined they are to achieve freedom. We salute the events led by the Mothers of Peace and Mothers of Laleh Park in Eastern Kurdistan and Iran. Women's committees were established in Kurdistan, Tehran and different cities on the occasion of 8 March. This shows that women are now constantly involved in the organization and solidarity process. Now, women have understood that the more they organize, the closer they are to success. We believe that these established committees will be organized in a systematic way and will convey the 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi' philosophy to every individual in society. They should lead to the organization of women in every field."

Women have turned everywhere into an area for struggle

Referring to the earthquake disaster in Bakur and Rojava, Peyman Viyan said: "Following the earthquake disaster in Bakur and Rojava, women worked for earthquake victims with great solidarity. Women turned 8 March into the day of taking care and supporting each other, as well as living a free life. We salute the women and their actions once again. Women in Rojhilat and Iran have turned every place into a field for

struggle. Whatever the cost, women never left the squares. That's why they insisted on struggle and freedom. This year's 8 March in Rojhilat and Iran was different from all the previous ones. With the 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi' revolution, women also attracted men to the struggle. This step is definitely a very important one. The 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi' revolution was the biggest blow to the Iranian state.”

Viyan added: “The Iranian state is doing everything it can to suppress this revolution. One of the policies implemented by the state is the poisoning of female students. These uprisings once again revealed how much the Iranian state fears women. They specifically target young women to avoid facing what they fear. This revolution, which developed under the leadership of women and young people, continues. Where there are women and young people, the potential for freedom is certainly strong. Because they never bow to power. The biggest upheavals during the revolution took place in schools and universities. In school, especially young women, very radically and violently opposed the mentality of the Iranian state. In addition, young women played their roles in universities and showed their struggles very clearly.

These reactions of the students have nullified the policy of the Iranian state in schools and universities for years. This is how they want to avenge the 'Jin, Jiyan, Azadi' revolution by poisoning female students. The dictator state will give an account for what it has done. They carry out such attacks to frighten young people and their families. The state has been trying to break the will of the people with these killing, torture and execution policies for 44 years. Women, young people, teachers and families of students should hold the state to account in the squares. Again, human rights institutions need to put a lot of pressure on them. The Iranian state should know well that it cannot silence anyone by killing and poisoning.”

Every woman should defend herself against attacks

KJAR member Viyan emphasized that every woman should develop her own defense against the attacks carried out by the state and added: “Every committee should have a defense committee which will address physical, psychological and emotional defense. We will further strengthen our women's defense system. We must practice self-defense in all areas of life. We are ready to take even more important steps this year. We will expand our efforts with our strength and experience to further expand the women's confederalism system.

This is how we will ensure freedom as women. We will make 2023 the year of victory and freedom in Rojhilat Kurdistan and Iran. We believe that all women and our freedom-loving people will welcome and celebrate the 2023 Newroz with this strength and enthusiasm. I salute the women whose hearts beat for freedom and all our people who resisted the oppressive Iranian state. We will definitely make this year a success year for women.”

YJA Star Commander: “March 8 united all women fighting for a free world”

EGID SIRWAN | BEHDINAN | 10 MARCH 2023

YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) Command Council Member Hêzil Özgür addressed the guerrilla troops to mark it on the occasion of March 8, International Working Women's Day.

Hêzil Özgür stated the following:

“First of all, as we mark March 8, we congratulate Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, the architect of freedom, who promoted women's cause. We congratulate all the mothers of martyrs, women and our comrades who resist on the battle fronts. March 8 is a very meaningful day, for which huge prices were paid. Women have always been in rebellion and resistance against the power and the system that abuse women's rights, and they have fought for their rights and freedoms. There have been multiple women's revolts in history, and women have created many leading figures to obtain their rights and create a free identity for themselves.

However, women have often faced torture, arrests, and murders. They have nevertheless not renounced the struggle for freedom. March 8 bears such a meaningful legacy. The power and the male-dominated mentality established a system based on women's subjection and did not grant women any rights. The only role assigned to women was to give birth to a child and take care of the family, and men sold women and used them as tools. The male-dominated system does not recognize the identity and will of women. Of course, there have been various struggles against this system, yet they failed to liberate women.

The emergence of Öcalan, the formation of the PKK ideology and the Apoist ideology brought about major changes. Öcalan re-evaluated and reinterpreted the history of power, the history of women and the history of society in general. He wanted to build a society that promotes free women and thus introduced a democratic, ecological and pro-women paradigm. The PKK has waged a struggle based on women's freedom. Many ideologies and organizations have emerged throughout history, but they never attached importance to women's freedom as the PKK. So, no significant progress has been made in this regard. Even many historical figures who played a role in women's liberation did not attract attention.

‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’

Öcalan drew conclusions from all these and introduced correct interpretations of society and family. A free society can be built through the freedom of women and equality between women and men. A free society should be based on democracy and diversity. Currently, women within the PKK have a free identity and have assumed leading roles in society, politics and the army. They participate in the freedom struggle and lead the revolution with their own perspectives. This has been proven in Rojava. Now, women in Rojhilat (East Kurdistan) and Iran are leading popular revolts under the iconic motto ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ (Woman, Life, Freedom). If women are organized and remain resolute in society, no dominant system can prevent them. What is currently happening in Rojhilat and Iran is proof of that.

Every pro-freedom individual who wants to fight dictatorships should join the rebellion. The Iranian protests standing up for Jina Amini, are also a rebellion against the male-dominated system and mentality. This uprising and struggle are inspired by Öcalan's ideology, as the 'Jin, Jiyan ,Azadi' slogan was created by him. This shows that the freedom struggle of Kurdish women has transcended the borders and they have become the leaders of the freedom struggle worldwide.

Women absolutely need a system and organization that supports them to obtain their freedom. Öcalan insists that women should have a free and independent will and therefore lead the struggle. Öcalan's struggle is entirely based on women's freedom. Therefore, many women's organizations and feminist organizations around the world embrace Öcalan's ideology and consider themselves a part of it.

'21st century is women's century'

After the Taliban came back to power in Afghanistan, Afghan women first sought assistance from Kurdish women. In fact, world public opinion focuses on Kurdish women. Oppressed women, especially in the Middle East, gain strength by focusing on the struggle of Kurdish women. It came out once again that the capitalist system has nothing to do with women and women's freedom. Inspired by Öcalan's ideology, women have now become leaders for the freedom of society. However, women have paid huge prices for their achievements.

When we look at the history of women's struggle within the PKK, we can realize that huge prices have been paid and thousands of women have sacrificed their lives. Women are resisting the male-dominated mentality with great will. Currently, the free women's movement plays its role in every field. Women carried out an outstanding struggle against ISIS as fighters of the YPJ in Rojava. The whole world was impressed by this struggle. They saw how Kurdish women defended both themselves and society.

Therefore, women all over the world now regard the Kurdish women's movement as their biggest supporter. Every woman gains experience from the Kurdish women's struggle and is proud of themselves to do so. As YJA Star forces, we are currently confronting the invasion of the Turkish state. Women across the world regard the YJA Star as a salvation army. The current resistance of female guerrillas offers hope and freedom to all women. The struggle introduced by the fighters such as Zilan, Besê, Bêrîtan and Sara reached its highest level in 2022 with the help of other fighters like Rûken, Mizgîn, Rojda, Çiya and Şevîn. We need to change the ruling system in order to create a better world and a free society. As Öcalan once said, the 21st century will be a century for the freedom of women and society. Thanks to Öcalan and all our martyrs, the women's struggle has reached its peak in the contemporary world. It is our duty to protect their efforts, raise the struggle and realize freedom's dream. We are very lucky to be members of the PKK and to fight for Öcalan's ideology."

19-year-old visually impaired woman dies under suspicious circumstances in Silvan

ANF | AMED | 12 MARCH 2023

Fatmagül Sabruk, a 19-year-old visually impaired person in Amed's Silvan district, died under suspicious circumstances. It was claimed that Sabruk 'fell' from the balcony of their house on the sixth floor. Sabruk, who was seriously injured, was brought to the hospital by the medical teams who arrived at the scene following a phone call. Despite the interventions at Yusuf Azizoglu State Hospital, Sabruk died.

Sabruk's body was sent to Amed for autopsy, while it was reported that an investigation was launched into the incident.

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Who is poisoning the Iranian schoolgirls?

ANF | 12 MARCH 2023

Mass poisonings have been occurring at girls' schools in Iran since last November. According to reports, four schoolgirls have died and up to 8,000 young women have been affected by the unexplained attacks in over a hundred cities. On Saturday, the series of attacks continued in a total of twelve schools in Sine (Sanandaj), the capital of Kurdistan province, as well as in Khuzestan on the Persian Gulf and in Gilan along the Caspian Sea. In Sine, where gas attacks took place in two schools, many schoolgirls were hospitalised with symptoms such as shortness of breath and nausea.

Iranian judicial circles have claimed in recent days that only ten per cent of the schoolgirls treated in hospitals actually suffered mild gas poisoning, while the remaining ninety per cent only showed psychological symptoms of anxiety. According to the Ministry of Interior, nearly one hundred people have been detained for causing the cancellation of classes by spreading harmless and foul-smelling gas.

The Iranian state blames "foreign powers" for the gas attacks. In the Iranian media, the British ambassador, Simon Shercliff, is particularly blamed. Mashregh News accuses the diplomat of direct involvement and writes that hostile intelligence services want to use the attacks to rekindle the dormant street protests.

The Iranian opposition, on the other hand, assumes that the state wants to punish and intimidate the leaders of the "Jin Jiyān Azadī" [Woman, Life, Freedom] revolution with the poison gas attacks. The parents of the poisoned schoolgirls are angry with the authorities because no action is being taken.

Sociology professor Saeed Paivanda of the Université de Lorraine told the French radio station RFI that the initial theory that a small group of extreme conservatives was acting against girls' schooling had initially seemed reasonable. However, since the phenomenon has spread so rapidly, Iranian society now as-

sumes that the Revolutionary Guards or intelligence structures are perpetrators. “The aim is to create a psychological atmosphere. The aim is to spread a collective fear without going too far and causing greater damage,” said the sociologist.

The Swedish-Iranian doctor, Abbas Mansouran, assumes a form of nerve gas and says that the attacks are carried out in a highly professional manner. Speaking to the MA news agency, Mansouran said: “The regime is hiding information about the gas used. There are government agents in the ambulances sent to the schools and in the hospitals. Even the results of the blood samples taken are kept secret and blood analyses in private clinics have been banned. The regime does not want this information to become public, which in turn means that it itself is behind these incidents.”

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Poison attacks on schoolgirls continue in Iran

ANF | 13 MARCH 2023

Poison attacks on schoolgirls in East Kurdistan and Iran continue. Many students are reported to have been affected by the gases on Sunday.

On March 12, a poison attack targeted a school in the village of Bêşaran in the Jaawu region of the city of Sine (Sanandaj) in East Kurdistan.

The Ministry of Interior said that more than 100 suspects have been detained so far. Supreme Leader Aya-tollah Ali Khamenei called for “the severest punishment” for the perpetrators. According to Iranian officials, suspects have been detained in Tehran and in 10 other provinces.

Iranian Education Minister Yusuf Nuri claimed that schools are safe, and students can go to schools without fear of poisoning.

In the meantime, protests against attacks also continue. Kurds from East Kurdistan and Iranians organized protests on Sunday in New Zealand, Canada, America, Sweden, Italy, France, Denmark, Germany and many more countries and expressed their support for the ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ (Woman, Life, Freedom) uprising.

At least 30 students at Allamah Tabatabai University in Tehran were banned from entering the university after protesting against the poison attacks against female students.

The poison attacks began in November and 4 schoolgirls have died so far. While more than 200 schools were targeted across the country, more than 5 thousand students were affected by the attacks. Iranian officials blame “foreign forces” for the attacks, while most Iranians and opponents believe that state forces are behind the series of organized attacks.

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13,000 students poisoned in Iran since November

ANF | TEHRAN | 14 MARCH 2023

Iranian Deputy Minister of Health Said Karimi said in a statement that 13,000 students received treatment after being attacked with poisonous gases.

Kerimi stated that no one lost their lives as a result of these attacks.

These attacks sparked new protests in the country last week. Doctors refer to attacks on students as “gas poisoning.”

Authorities say the attacks were planned, especially because the targeted schools are girls’ schools. Families are angry and are reacting to the authorities’ lack of action.

The Ministry of Interior announced that around 100 suspects have been detained so far.

The attacks took place in 25 of 31 Iranian regions. Hundreds of schools were targeted. Opponents think that the Iranian state is behind these attacks.

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Human Rights Violations

Human Rights Association condemns racist attack against Amedspor

ANF | ISTANBUL | 7 MARCH 2023

The Istanbul Branch of the Human Rights Association (İHD) made a written statement regarding the racist attacks against Amedspor before, during and after the match with Bursaspor.

While condemning the racist attack, the İHD called on prosecutors to “take action to punish those responsible”.

Emphasizing that the racist words and attacks by the organizers and supporters of the Bursa team were planned, the İHD drew attention to the unveiling of the photographs of Mahmut Yıldırım, whose code-name was “Green”, and who is known as the perpetrator of many unsolved political murders and disappearances under custody. The ‘supporters’ of Bursaspor also held a photo of the “White Taurus”, the car associated with these crimes.

The İHD said that the responsibility of the Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu should not be underestimated in the investigation into such photos.

The İHD made the following recommendations to prevent racist attacks:

- Effective investigations should be conducted against those responsible for racist and hate attacks at all levels, and impunity should be ended.
- Those who run the country and lead society should stop racist hate speech.
- Protocol No. 12, which is vital in the fight against racism and racial discrimination and regulates the prohibition of discrimination in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), signed by Turkey in 2001, should be ratified and put into practice.
- The scope of Article 10 of the Constitution and Article 122 of the Turkish Penal Code should be expanded to include those who are exposed to discrimination and hate attacks, and domestic law should be brought in line with relevant international legislation.



Today marks second anniversary of the Şenyaşar family's Vigil for Justice

ANF | URFA | 9 MARCH 2023

On 14 June 2018, the bodyguards and relatives of AKP Urfa MP Ibrahim Halil Yıldız attacked the Şenyaşar family's shop in Suruç during the election campaign.

In the attack, brothers Celal, Adil, Mehmet, Fadil and Ferit Şenyaşar were injured. Relatives and supporters of AKP MP Yıldız, badly injured Celal and Adil Şenyaşar, and their father Hacı Esvet Şenyaşar, when he went to the hospital to visit their sons. He was brutally murdered, being lynched in front of his wife Emine Şenyaşar.

Emine Şenyaşar and her son Ferit (who was injured in the attack), have been holding a Justice Vigil in front of the Courthouse of Urfa since 9 March 2021, demanding those responsible to be brought to account.

Today the Şenyaşar family will hold the 717th Vigil for Justice. The action started exactly 2 years ago. Ferit Şenyaşar drew attention to the 8 March International Working Women's Day and said: "A woman, a mother, has been waiting for justice in front of the Urfa Courthouse for two years. Everyone knows this injustice, everyone sees it."

Film screening

Today there will be the screening of a documentary about Emine Şenyavaş's struggle for justice. The screening will be in the Urfa Bar Association Tahir Elçi conference hall.

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Film pays tribute to the remarkable work of human rights lawyer Eren Keskin

ANF | 9 MARCH 2023

Director Maria Binder made a film dedicated to prominent human rights lawyer and Human Rights Association president, Eren Keskin.

The film, called *Eren* portrays a woman who has been fighting for fundamental rights and peace in Turkey for more than 30 years.

As a lawyer and human rights defender, Eren Keskin is one of the main actors and plaintiffs for women's, LGBT and minority rights, opposing torture and sexual violence. Her strong sense of justice knows no taboos, shaking even the foundations of the Turkish state.

Now she has been designated an enemy of the state and has to defend herself. She faces a life sentence in more than a hundred criminal cases. How much time she has left in freedom, she doesn't know. At any moment, she could disappear behind bars forever.

You can watch the trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2L8Ay5IzmHo&t=171s>

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Kurdish musician Ali Baran detained in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 9 MARCH 2023

Ali Baran, a musician from the northern Kurdish province of Dersim, was detained at Sabiha Gökçen airport in Istanbul, accused of "terror propaganda". The German citizen had travelled to Turkey to prepare a new album. He was taken to the public prosecutor's office.

Ali Baran comes from the district of Hozat in Dersim. He became known for his revolutionary music in the 1970s. After the military coup in Turkey in 1980, he applied for asylum in Germany due to persecution. He was naturalised in 1993.

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Berkin Elvan remembered on the ninth anniversary of his death

ANF | ISTANBUL | 11 MARCH 2023

Berkin Elvan was 14 years old and only went to get bread when he was hit in the head by a tear gas grenade during the Gezi protests in Istanbul in June 2013. After 269 days in a coma, he succumbed to his injuries on 11 March 2014 at the age of 15. On the ninth anniversary of his death, many people gathered at Feriköy cemetery in Istanbul's Şişli district on Saturday to remember Berkin Elvan.

“If my boy were still alive, he would be 24 years old today,” said Berkin's mother, Gülsüm Elvan. “But he was taken from life. We are angry. Angry because we are still waiting for justice. Angry because innocent children are still dying, whether at the hands of the police or under the rubble of houses that were not built to withstand earthquakes. Our only hope is that those responsible are prosecuted and justice is done.”

Berkin's father, Sami Elvan, criticised the fact that the police officer, Fatih Dalgacı, who fired the grenade at his son, is still at liberty. The shooter was sentenced to more than 16 years in prison in June 2021, eight years after the attack on Berkin Elvan. As the decision has not been confirmed by the Court of Cassation, Turkey's highest court of appeal, he is still at large.

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Former HDP Urfa MP Ibrahim Binici arrested

ANF | ANKARA | 12 MARCH 2023

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) former Urfa MP Ibrahim Binici was arrested at his home and taken to the Çankaya District Police Department. The former MP, whose statement was taken at the police station, was arrested and taken to Sincan Prison after his 1 year and 18 months prison sentence was finalized by the Urfa 4th High Criminal Court, where he was tried because of a speech he made in Viranşehir within the scope of political party activities.

The prison sentence given to Binici in 2020 on the charge of “propaganda for a terrorist organization” went to the Supreme Court upon appeal, which upheld the prison sentence in December 2022. Binici was arrested after the decision of approval given by the Supreme Court.

Binici was released on 26 June 2021, after 9 months of detention in the Kobanê Case.

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Nine people including a journalist detained in house raids

ANF | ISTANBUL | 12 MARCH 2023

Turkish police stormed several flats in Istanbul, Ankara and Adana and detained nine people, including journalist Elif Bayburt, who works as a correspondent for the ETHA news agency. The other detainees are members of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF), the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) and the Socialist Women's Councils (SKM).

The detentions were made by order of the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, with the reason not being known. The file is classified and the detainees held at Vatan Police Station are denied access to lawyers.

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Thousands remember victims of the Gazi massacre in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 12 MARCH 2023

Numerous people remembered the victims of the Gazi massacre on Sunday and demanded the punishment of the perpetrators. 28 years after the massacre of the Alevi community perpetrated from 12 to 15 March 1995 in Istanbul's Sultangazi and Ümraniye districts, those responsible for the crime still enjoy impunity. "The shooters and masterminds are at liberty and in the protective custody of impunity granted to them by the Turkish state. This state of affairs must end. We will fight for this," said a statement by the '12 March Platform', which together with Alevi groups organised the commemoration march.

The demonstration started in front of the Gazi Cemevi (Alevi place of worship) and ended at the local cemetery where most of the victims of the pogrom are buried. The route led, as it does every year, past those places in the neighbourhood where the massacre took place. At each place, a pause was made and those present laid red carnations. Among the participants of the commemoration march were also members and associations of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) and the Labour Party (EMEP).

Many people carried pictures of the victims and held up placards with inscriptions such as "Murderer State". A spokesperson for the platform called out the names of those killed, and the crowd replied each time, "Here!" The names of the provinces hit in the severe earthquakes of 6 February were also shouted. "Government, resign" could be heard from the demonstration after each mention.

The commemoration was accompanied by a large police contingent, which relied on conflict from the beginning. The police intervened in the demonstration several times to confiscate allegedly banned posters and flags.

A rally was held at the Hüseyin Altın Park, where Erkan Şimşek, who lost his sister Dilek Şimşek in the massacre, recalled the political atmosphere of the nineties and the circumstances of the Gazi massacre, in which at least 22 people were murdered and hundreds more injured by ultranationalists and the police.

It all started when “unknown perpetrators” from nationalist circles hijacked a taxi in Gazi on the night of 12 March and cut the driver’s throat. As they drove by, they shot indiscriminately with automatic weapons into Alevi cafés, cultural houses and pastry shops, killing one person and injuring countless others. The vehicle was then set on fire.

Protests then broke out in front of a police station 200 metres from the scene. The peaceful demonstration escalated when a military tank drove into the crowd. The “security forces” murdered 20 demonstrators, five of them in Ümraniye, by targeted gunfire and wounded at least 300 others during these days. The pogrom was accompanied by systematic mass arrests, house searches and police raids in several neighbourhoods of Istanbul. Some of those detained, like thousands of other people in Turkey, are still considered “disappeared” today.

“State terror has always been part of everyday life in Gazi,” said Erkan Şimşek. Especially in the 1990s, he said, the policy of oppression escalated. “The state tried to crush the revolutionary groups in Gazi and intimidate the democratic population by deepening the Alevi-Sunni polarisation of society.”

“To date, only two police officers involved in the massacre have been convicted. Adem Albayrak received three and a half years in prison for the murder of four people at a show trial, while his colleague Mehmet Gündoğdu, who killed two people from Gazi, got off with an eighteen-month sentence. But those actually responsible have not been brought to justice until today,” Şimşek said, naming their names: Tansu Çiller, then Prime Minister of Turkey, who is seen as responsible not only for the Gazi massacre but more generally for the pogroms of the 1990s; Nahit Menteşe, Interior Minister of the Çiller government; Hanefi Avcı, Chief of the Directorate of Police Intelligence; Necdet Menzir, Istanbul Police Commissioner; Mehmet Açar, Chief of the General Directorate of Police; Hayri Kozakçıoğlu, Governor of Istanbul as well as their assailants.

Following the demonstration, the crowd marched to the Gazi cemetery and commemorated the victims.

13 detained in political genocide operation in İzmir

ANF | İZMİR | 13 MARCH 2023

In the run-up to the elections in Turkey, repression against the opposition is increasing. In Izmir, several flats were stormed by the police in the early morning and 13 people were taken into custody. After health checks, the detainees were transferred to the anti-terror police department in Çankaya.

The detainees include HDP provincial executive Mahsun Koç, HDP Party Council member Mehmet Sabri Gül, HDP administrator Hediye Korkut, Peace Mothers Sultan Yağmekan, Hanife Gümüş, Ayten Gülmez, Zeynep Çelik and Fatma Sürme.

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Sign of “Berkin Elvan Playground” in Malatya seized by the police

ANF | MALATYA | 13 MARCH 2023

The sign of the “Berkin Elvan Playground”, which was set up next to the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) coordination tents for the earthquake victims in the central Yeşilyurt district of Malatya, has been seized by the police.

The police seized the wooden sign saying that the name Berkin Elvan was “political”.

Berkin Elvan was 14 years old and only went to get bread when he was hit in the head by a tear gas grenade during the Gezi protests in Istanbul in June 2013. After 269 days in a coma, he succumbed to his injuries on 11 March 2014 at the age of 15.

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Newroz

2023 Newroz dedicated to those who lost their lives in the earthquake

ANF | 9 MARCH 2023

Newroz 2023 will be held with the slogans “Every day Newroz, always free” and “Freedom with the fire of Newroz”, and will be dedicated to those who lost their lives in the Maraş-centered earthquakes.

Newroz 2023 will start in Amed on 10 March, under the leadership of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), the Free Women’s Movement (Tevgera Jinên Azad-TJA), the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP). The Newroz Declaration will be announced in Istanbul on 11 March by the HDK and HDP.

The anger towards the government, which rose in the earthquake area and was reflected in the 8 March events, will be carried to the Newroz squares, which will also be the place where the election agenda begins.

First fire in Şemdinli, final in Amed

The first fire of the 2023 Newroz, will be lit in the Şemdinli (Şemzînan) in the province of Hakkari on 15 March. In addition to the 43 main celebrations, the final celebration of Newroz will be in Amed on 21 March.

However, since 16 March is the anniversary of the Halabja Massacre and 17 March will mark the 40th day since the 6 February earthquake, there will be no celebrations on both days.

In many cities and towns there won’t be celebrations on Saturday, 18 March and Sunday, 19 March, but commemorative events will be held.

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Buldan: Newroz will mark the beginning of a great change

ANF | AMED | 10 MARCH 2023

Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) Co-Chair Pervin Buldan delivered a speech at a meeting in Amed, launching events to mark 2023 Newroz, Kurdish New Year.

Newroz represents resistance

Buldan said: “Once again, I commemorate all our people who lost their lives in the recent earthquake disaster. Our friends stated in a declaration that we would not celebrate this year’s Newroz in a festive air. I would like to emphasize that we will not welcome it in a joyful way, yet in accordance with the spirit of Newroz.”

Buldan added: “Newroz represents resistance against corruption, oppression, injustice, bans and exploitation in Turkey. It is a meeting of peoples in solidarity, where national unity and common struggle are promoted.”

The peoples of Turkey want a political change

“We are also living at a time when social solidarity is highlighted to heal the wounds caused by earthquakes. It is important that we come together to show solidarity and unity. We have different issues to address during Newroz events this year. We will say that the government has petered out and the peoples of Turkey want a political change,” she added.

We will never give up the struggle

The HDP Co-chair continued: “The Newroz alliance will be a covenant for a great struggle to shape a new future. In this sense, this year’s Newroz is very important. I would like to say that we will achieve this by coming together in unity and solidarity through a common struggle. We will tell the AKP-MHP alliance that we are not afraid of the government and never give up the struggle.”

Newroz will mark a great change

“We know that this government is anti-Kurdish, anti-peace and misogynist. The peoples of Turkey and the Kurdish women’s alliance will certainly prompt a change. Newroz will mark a major change,” Buldan noted.

Kurdish alliance

Buldan added: “When the government looks at this year’s Newroz, it will see that the time for a change has come. The government will see the unity of the peoples of Turkey and the alliance of the Kurds. The spirit of Newroz will spark a great change on May 14 when the elections are to be held. It will change the whole country. Once again, I urge all our peoples to come together in the Newroz areas, to show solidarity and to pioneer a change.”

First fire of Newroz in Switzerland was lit in Chur

ANF | CHUR | 12 MARCH 2023

Kurds and their friends gathered at Bahnhofplatz to attend the event organized by the Democratic Kurdish Community Center (CDK) in Chur and marched to Fontana Park.

The march ended with a rally. The people held a minute's silence in memory of the martyrs of the Kurdistan Freedom Struggle in the person of those who lost their lives in the 6 February Maraş-centered earthquake and the leaders of the Newroz resistance.

Then the Newroz fire was lit by peace mothers. Afterwards, Zahit Yalun made a short speech on behalf of CDK Chur.

Yalun said that they dedicate this year's Newroz to those who lost their lives in the Maraş-centered earthquake, and added: "We lit the first fire of Newroz in Switzerland. Newroz is the symbol of resistance for us."

Referring to the absolute isolation imposed on Kurdish people's Leader Abdullah Öcalan, Yalun said: "We will liberate our Leader by continuing to protect the resistance spirit of Newroz. 2023 will be the year of freedom for the Kurdish people, Kurdistan and our Leader."

The event ended with a call for participation to the Newroz festival to be celebrated in Friborg on 18 March.



First fire of Newroz in Germany lit in Berlin

ANF | BERLIN | 12 MARCH 2023

The first fire of this year's Newroz was lit in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin on Sunday. According to the organisers, about 2,500 people took part in the celebration at Oranienplatz. The programme included cultural performances by well-known Kurdish artists as well as political speeches.

Newroz is the Kurdish New Year on 21 March. On this day, Kurds all over the world celebrate the beginning of a new year. Newroz means "the new day". It arose from the spirit of resistance of the Kurdish people and developed over the years into a celebration of political resistance against oppression and despotism. It also represents the end of winter and welcomes spring.

As a festival of rebirth, it first gained importance among the Kurdish people and was later adopted by other Iranian peoples. Kurds, Afghans, Persians, Baluchis and Tajiks celebrate this festival today, and they

have all added their own national customs to it. The Newroz festival is probably the oldest Kurdish festival.

According to the organisers, the fact that the celebration in Berlin was brought forward this year is an act of solidarity. The background is the earthquake catastrophe in Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria a good month ago. The Kurdish Red Crescent Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê, which provides humanitarian aid in the Kurdish disaster area, accepted numerous donations during the celebration.

The musical programme included performances by Nevşan, Özgür Işık, Bengi Agirî, Beser Şahin, Hozan Aydın and Hani Mojtahedy. Speeches were made by Ilham Ehmed, the co-chair of the Executive Committee of the Syrian Democratic Council (MSD), who travelled from Rojava, and Sezai Temelli, who is a member of parliament in Ankara for the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP).

Ilham Ehmed: Resistance against occupation continues resolutely

Summarising the current situation in North and East Syria, Ilham Ehmed stressed that the Turkish occupation in the areas of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) is torpedoing democratic political efforts towards a peace settlement. "The only way towards a free and democratic Syria is a political transition inclusive of all the peoples residing in the country, in line with the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Syrian nation." In order to embark on this path, she said, it is necessary to end the Turkish occupation supported by jihadist militias. "The Kurdish people and all other communities in AANES are determined to resolutely continue their resistance for freedom and democracy," she underlined.

Sezai Temelli: Fighting against a regime of injustice

HDP politician Sezai Temelli drew up a kind of "damage assessment" with regard to Turkey and spoke of a "regime of injustices" that dominates the country led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his AKP party. He stated: "This tyranny has transformed Turkey into an autocracy and destroyed democratic institutions. From the very beginning, the policies of Erdogan and his party have been aimed at the question of how to gain and maintain government power. In order to maintain its own existence, the regime has turned the country into a single prison, with practically the entire population in isolation. Members of all minorities and oppressed peoples are terrorised daily and with increasing violence. There is no institution, no social structure and no place that is not affected by homogenisation and political oppression. The HDP is there to oppose and fight against these injustices. Fighting for democracy, fighting for freedom. This is our ideal that we will achieve."

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KON-MED: Newroz celebration will be turned into a freedom march!

This year the central Newroz celebration in Germany will be held in Frankfurt. In a written statement, KON-MED (Confederation of Kurdish Societies in Germany) co-chairs stated that all preparations for the celebration to be held on 25 March have been completed.

The statement said: “As KON-MED, we will turn the 50th Leadership Newroz into a freedom and equality march on 25 March. This year’s slogan will be “Newroza serkeftinê ya serdemê”.

The statement continued: “We will hold the AKP-MHP fascism to account, in line with the spirit of Kawa’s great uprising against Dehak. We will reiterate our call for the physical freedom of the Kurdish people’s leader, who has been in severe isolation for years. In this Newroz, our people will once again declare their will under the leadership of women and young people.

Today, the whole world is talking about the ideology of women’s liberation created by Leader Apo and is meeting around the paradigm of democratic, women’s liberation and ecological life. Jin, Jiyan, Azadi became a focus of the global revolution.

The 2023 Newroz, which coincides with the 50th anniversary of the struggle of the Kurdish people, will be the Newroz of freedom.

Newroz is the coming together of all colors, unity and determination to struggle. Newroz is our love for freedom and the fire of freedom that will never go out. We invite all our people to gather around the fire of freedom against the oppressors.”

The statement added: “KON-MED, the umbrella organization of Kurdish institutions in Germany, calls on everyone to attend the main Newroz celebration on 25 March, on the basis of strengthening the national unity of our people.”

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First Newroz fire in Qamishlo lit by Martyr Adil Lewend's mother

ANF | QAMISHLO | 13 MARCH 2023

The first Newroz fire of this year was lit in the city of Qamishlo. The Newroz fire was lit in front of Martyr Adil Lewend commune in Kornîş District. Terfa Musa, mother of HPG Martyr Adil Lewend, lit the fire.

Dozens of citizens from the neighbourhood danced halay around the Newroz fire.

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Newroz celebrations program announced

ANF | 13 MARCH 2023

The 2023 Newroz will be held this year with the slogan “Her der Newroz her der Azadi” and “We will get free with the fire of Newroz”.

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK), Tevgera Jinên Azad (TJA), Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), announced the Newroz declaration in Amed on 10 March.

The declaration said that this year’s Newroz events were dedicated to the victims of the two Maraş-centered earthquakes on 6 February.

Celebrations are planned to be held in 43 cities. However, Newroz fires will be lit in all provinces, districts, towns and villages.

The first Newroz fire will be lit in Şemdinli (Şemzînan), in the province of Hakkari (Colemêrg) on 15 March.

Events will be held on 16 March to mark the anniversary of the Halabja Massacre.

Since 17 March is the 40th day after the earthquake, no events will be held.

The main Newroz celebration will be held in Amed on 21 March.

The city-by-city Newroz calendar is as follows:

18 March

Colemêrg (Hakkari), Xarpêt-Dep (Elazığ-Karakoçan), Agirî-Panos (Ağrı-Patnos), Mûş-Kop (Muş-Bulanik), Aydın-Germencik.

19 March

Istanbul, Wan (Van), Mêrdîn-Qoser (Mardin-Kızıltepe), Colemêrg-Gever (Hakkari- Yüksekova), Dersim, Çewlig (Bingöl), Êlih (Batman), Sêrt (Siirt), Îdir (İğdır), Muş, Ankara, Mersin, Antalya, İzmir, Aydın, Muğla, Denizli, Manisa, Bursa, Tekirdağ, Balıkesir, Kocaeli-Gebze, Agirî-Bazîd (Doğubayazıt), Bedlis-Tetwan (Bitlis-Tatvan), Sakarya-Arifîye.

20 March

Qers (Kars), Agirî (Ağrı), Erdexan (Ardahan), Mêrdîn-Nisêbîn (Mardin-Nusaybin), Erzirom-Qereyazî (Erzurum-Karayazı).

21 March

Amed, Sirnex-Cizîr (Şırnak-Cizre), Riha-Werañsar (Urfa-Virañşehir), Çanakkale.

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General Elections in Turkey

AYM postpones date for HDP's defense in closure case, lifts blocking of Treasury aid

ANF | ANKARA | 9 MARCH 2023

The Turkish Constitutional Court (AYM) on Thursday postponed the date for the defense of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) in the closure case against the party. Accordingly, HDP will make its defense on the merits on 11 April.

On the other hand, the AYM lifted the blocking of the HDP accounts where the treasury aid is transferred. According to the decision, which was taken by a majority vote, HDP will be receiving aid ahead of the elections scheduled for 14 May. At the beginning of January, the country's highest court made the internationally sharply criticised decision to cut off financial aid to the second largest opposition party for the time being because of accusations of "links to terrorism". As a result, the HDP lost access to 27 million euros, a third of which should have been paid out a few days after the judges' vote.

The HDP had described the exclusion from state party funding as "targeted sabotage" to prevent fair and democratic elections. In response, a fundraising campaign was initiated under the name "Our treasury is our people". The campaign, which started with donations from the HDP parliamentary group, has generated widespread participation.

The Constitutional Court is currently being asked to order the closure of the HDP, a political party with 56 deputies in Turkey's parliament. An indictment against the party seeks to ban 451 politicians and party members from organized political activity or membership of political parties for a period of five years and forfeiture of the party's assets. On January 5, the Constitutional Court agreed to a request by the chief prosecutor of the Court of Cassation for an interim measure of freezing the party's bank accounts containing treasury support which political party groups in parliament are entitled to receive.

During the closure process, the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation can present corroborating evidence to the case file, while the HDP can present additional defence. The HDP has already submitted to the Constitutional Court its defence in response to the accusations and HDP officials will make a verbal defence on a day to be scheduled.

After this process, a Constitutional Court rapporteur, who will collect information and documents related to the case, will prepare a report on the merits of the case. In the meantime, the Chief Public Prosecutor of

the Court of Cassation and the HDP will be able to submit corroborating evidence or additional written defence.

After the distribution of the report to members of the Supreme Court, the President of the Constitutional Court, Zühtü Arslan, will set a date for a meeting where the members will come together to discuss the closure request.

A 15-person Constitutional Court committee will make a decision in the closure case against the HDP. A 2/3 majority of the members attending the meeting, i.e. 10 out of 15 members, will decide whether the party will be closed pursuant to the Article 69 of the Constitution or whether the party will be partially or completely deprived of treasury aid depending on the severity of the accusations in question.

The final decision will then be notified to the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation and the HDP and will be published by the Official Gazette. Should the Constitutional Court rule that the party members who are facing a political ban caused the closure of the party through their remarks and actions, these party members will not be able to serve as a founder, member, administrator and supervisor of another party for 5 years, starting from the publication of the final decision in the Official Gazette.

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Call for solidarity with the HDP on 13 March

ANF | ANKARA | 10 MARCH 2023

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) is at the culmination of a years-long, politically-motivated trial aimed at closing down the party. This will be the final stage of a legal process that began on 17 March 2021 targeting Turkey's third-largest party, which will play a king-maker role in the upcoming elections if it is not banned.

HDP's defence in the closure case is now scheduled for April 11

In the latest phase, the HDP had requested at least three months' postponement in its application but, the court only postponed it until 11 April. On that date, the party's co-chairs will give an oral defence before the Turkish Constitutional Court. After that, the rapporteur of the Constitutional Court will prepare his report on the party's legal status, and the procedure initiated by the Constitutional Court to close down the HDP will continue.

Banning the HDP as groundwork for the Turkish elections

HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar made a statement on Halk TV on 20 March 2021 in which he pointed out the cooperation between Turkey's governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) and their coalition partners, the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), saying they were laying plans for the election.

Sancar stated: "This government cannot win elections through promises to the people. It has begun creating construction plans, the most important part of which is to eliminate the HDP. I had hoped that the

Prosecutor General would not initiate this procedure despite everything. It is no coincidence that on 17 March, one day before the MHP's congress, a request was made to stop the proceedings. There were talks between the MHP leader Bahçeli and the AKP leader Erdoğan on this issue.”

This long-term calculation is achieving its results immediately prior to the official announcement of the Turkish election. If the HDP were to be banned, the king-maker would be eliminated from the democratic process.

What happens next?

After the oral defence, a rapporteur will collect the information and documents on the proceedings for a special report. After the report is distributed to the members of the Supreme Court, the President of the Court, Zühtü Arslan, will set a date for the hearing. The members of the Constitutional Court will convene on the appointed day and begin discussing the application to ban HDP. The 15-member panel is expected to continue its deliberations without interruption until the decision is made.

The closure of the HDP can be decided by a majority of 10 out of the 15 members present. In addition to banning the HDP, a 5-year ban from politics is being sought for 451 HDP members including the co-chairs, elected members of parliament, and party council members.

“This politically-motivated procedure must not lead to a ban of the HDP shortly before the elections. This is because a ban on the HDP would mean a renewed violation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). No less than seven parties from the political tradition on which the HDP is based have already been closed in the past, with the Turkish authorities violating the ECHR in all cases. Banning the HDP would mean that a party that was democratically elected by millions of people in the previous election would no longer be able to participate in the political process, said HDP Europe in a statement about the latest developments.

The HDP also faces other systematic legal repression and criminalization such as the trial seeking over 10,000 years' jail time against HDP members who protested against ISIS' deadly attacks on the Kurds, and the removal from power of 59 out of 65 democratically-elected HDP mayors. Moreover, the HDP filed a request earlier this year to postpone the final court date for a decision on the closure case until after the elections expected for May or June 2023. This was rejected by the court. As a consequence, on 5 January 2022 – around six months before the expected election date – the Constitutional Court froze the HDP's bank accounts and blocked its share of public funds for the electoral campaign. On March 9, the Constitutional Court overturned the block of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) accounts where the treasury aid is transferred.

European Representative of the HDP, Devriş Çimen, said: “The judicial release of the accounts to which the state funds are transferred is positive, but it is not a sufficient step. This is the right of the HDP, as well as the right of all other parties. The same applies to the HDP's participation in politics and thus in the elections. Political machinations, repression, the gutting of our communities, the imprisonment of thousands of our members, blocking of our accounts, etc. are only some elements of the systematic policy of an authoritarian regime that wants to deprive the HDP, as an important opponent, of the possibility of political participation. The HDP will resist this. For this resistance, it needs solidarity and support. There-

fore, all those who stand in defence of democracy, human rights and freedom are called upon to show solidarity with HDP.”

Call for solidarity with the HDP on 13 March

To counter Erdoğan’s political calculations and efforts to disrupt the fundamental role HDP should play in the Turkish elections, the HDP should be supported internationally. Therefore, the European representation of the HDP is calling for an international campaign led by political parties and politicians on 13 March, to oppose Erdoğan’s anti-democratic course and to show solidarity with the HDP. This date was symbolically chosen, as an opportunity to show solidarity with the HDP one day before the announced date for the co-presidents’ defence. Despite the fact that the court’s recent decision moved the date forward from 14 March to 11 April, 13 March remains a day of international solidarity with HDP.

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Erdogan officially announces date for elections

ANF | 10 MARCH 2023

Signing a decision on Friday, Turkish President Erdogan said that the country’s parliamentary and presidential elections would be held on May 14. Once the decision is published in the Official Gazette, the Supreme Election Board (YSK) will have the final say.

The YSK will meet either today or tomorrow to approve the decision. The YSK will convene again next week and announce the election schedule.

If the president is not elected in the first round, the second round will take place on May 28.

Erdogan is seeking another term in office in the election. According to the constitution, however, he would not be allowed to run for the presidency again. Section 101 of the Turkish constitution sets a maximum limit of two terms for the president. Because Erdogan was already elected president in 2014 and confirmed in office in 2018, the opposition parties argue that this is the end for the AKP politician.

Erdogan rejects the objections. He argues that with the new constitution of 2018, the count starts all over again, and that nothing constitutionally stands in the way of his running for another five-year term. Erdogan was prime minister from 2003 before becoming president in 2014. In 2017, he introduced a presidential system by constitutional referendum and established a one-man regime.

According to polls, Erdogan must fear for his re-election this time. The autocratic long-term ruler has been criticised for the lack of a crisis management plan after the devastating earthquakes on February 6, which left tens of thousands dead and thousands injured.

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Kurdistan Alliance convenes in Amed

ANF | AMED | 10 MARCH 2023

The Kurdistan Alliance convened at the Headquarters of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) in Amed (Diyarbakir) on Friday.

The meeting was attended by DBP Co-Chair Saliha Aydeniz, Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Co-Chair Berdan Öztürk, Human and Freedom Party (PIA) Chair Mehmet Kamaç, Azadî (Freedom) Party Chair Ayetullah Aşiti, Kurdistan Communist Party (KKP) member Sinan Çiftyürek, Revolutionary Democratic Kurdish Association (DDKD) member Halim İpek, Kurdistan Democratic Party-Turkey (KDP-T) member Mehmet Emin Kardeş and HDP deputies Necdet İpekyüz, İmam Taşçier and Nusrettin Maçin.

According to reports, the meeting was organised to discuss the Peoples' Democratic Party's (HDP) decision to reconsider whether to nominate a candidate to run in the upcoming elections, set to take place on May 14.

The Alliance will convey its position on the presidential elections to the HDP and its tendency to nominate a candidate.

The HDP, in turn, will inform the Labour and Freedom Alliance about the outcome of the Kurdistan Alliance meeting. The HDP formed the Alliance for Labour and Freedom (Emek ve Özgürlük İttifakı) last September with the Social Freedom Party (TÖP), the Labour Movement Party (EHP), the Federation of Socialist Councils (SMF), the Worker' Party of Turkey (TİP) and the Labour Party (EMEP), which intends to run its own candidate in the parliamentary elections.

The final decision is expected to be announced to the public at the Labour and Freedom Alliance's meeting.

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HDP: We are ready!

ANF | ANKARA | 11 MARCH 2023

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) said it is ready for the elections. Using the label #BizHazırız (We are ready), the party responded in this way via social media to the Presidential Decree signed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that confirmed 14 May as the date of the elections.

The HDP wrote: "We are ready for the election to be held on 14 May. Those who destroy the country and deepen injustice should be ready for the biggest defeat in history! #BizHazırız, we will change this regime that collapsed the country. No one can prevent this change. The time has come. Good luck to all of us in advance for the bright future we will create together.

The election date has been set. We are ready to establish a new life, to make democracy, peace, labor and freedom prevail, to create historical change.”

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36 parties to run in Turkey's elections in May

ANF | ANKARA | 11 MARCH 2023

Signing a decision on Friday, Turkish President Erdogan said that the country's parliamentary and presidential elections would be held on May 14. Later in the day, the decision was published in the Official Gazette, and approved by the Supreme Election Board (YSK).

YSK announced the list of 36 political parties eligible to run in the presidential and parliamentary elections.

If the president is not elected in the first round, the second round will take place on May 28.

Erdogan is seeking another term in office in the election. According to the constitution, however, he would not be allowed to run for the presidency again. Section 101 of the Turkish constitution sets a maximum limit of two terms for the president. Because Erdogan was already elected president in 2014 and confirmed in office in 2018, the opposition parties argue that this is the end for the AKP politician.

Erdogan rejects the objections. He argues that with the new constitution of 2018, the count starts all over again, and that nothing constitutionally stands in the way of his running for another five-year term. Erdogan was prime minister from 2003 before becoming president in 2014. In 2017, he introduced a presidential system by constitutional referendum and established a one-man regime.

According to polls, Erdogan must fear for his re-election this time. The autocratic long-term ruler has been criticised for the lack of a crisis management plan after the devastating earthquakes on February 6, which left tens of thousands dead and thousands injured.

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Supreme Election Board releases list of forbidden things on elections day

ANF | ANKARA | 13 MARCH 2023

The Supreme Election Board (YSK) published in the Official Gazette the things forbidden on the day of the Presidential and parliamentary elections, 14 May. According to the decision, media organs will not be able to make news, predictions and comments on the election results until 6pm Turkish time.

All broadcasts will be released from 9pm. However, if the YSK deems it necessary, broadcasts can be released before that time.

On the day of voting, it would be prohibited to carry a gun, except for “staff responsible for maintaining security and order”.

In addition, alcoholic beverages will not be sold on election day. Likewise, giving and drinking alcoholic beverages in public places will be prohibited.

Entertainment venues will remain closed during the voting period. Only meals can be served in restaurants that are also used as entertainment venues.

All public entertainment venues such as coffee shops and internet cafes will be closed on election day.

On 14 May, weddings can be held after 6pm, provided that the election bans and rules are followed.



Interview

Temelli: There is hope that a common struggle will help get rid of this government

RONI ARAM | ISTANBUL | 8 MARCH 2023

HDP's Sezai Temelli said that his party would determine a road map according to Kılıçdaroğlu's position as a candidate on behalf of democracy forces. Temelli underlined: “As long as this order is maintained, oppression, poverty, hunger, war and death will prevail in the country. The forces of democracy should invent the necessary response during this election process.”

ANF interviewed HDP Van MP Temelli about the upcoming elections and the latest developments in the country.

There was a candidate crisis within the Nation Alliance, which also affected the political atmosphere in Turkey. How does your party treat this crisis?

We understand that the Nation Alliance was always prone to a crisis. They did not address the candidate issue despite reaching agreement on everything else in their months-long talks. It has long been known that the alliance had two tendencies to pick up a presidential candidate. On the one hand, there was the main opposition leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, and on the other hand, IYI party leader, Meral Akşener, was talking about a “candidate who could win”. Akşener was referring to CHP's popular mayors, Ekrem

İmamoğlu and Mansur Yavaş. Both mayors, however, were promoting their leader. I think that reducing this crisis to a candidate debate does not explain the issue well enough.

How so?

If there was a crisis that revolved only around the candidate issue, a solution similar to the one that emerged in the last 72 hours could have been found much earlier. As far as we can see, there were certain developments that have not yet been revealed to the public. I would like to emphasize that the public has the right to know what happened because people will elect a new president. People will vote to shape Turkey's future. Therefore, what happened should be explained to the public. Of course, HDP voters need an explanation, too. We think that Akşener's approach to our party remained decisive during the candidate crisis.

Turkey has lost 20 years because of the government. The country has moved away from many things with regard to democracy. Citizens have experienced very serious grievances for the past 20 years. The Kurdish people have also been massively affected by war, violence, crackdown and poverty. The HDP has been constantly accused, many of our colleagues, including former co-chairs, are in prison. Many of our friends have been forced to live in exile.

We have seen how a government that is reluctant to resolve the Kurdish question has created multiple problems in the country and how the recent earthquake has escalated the situation. It would have been different if the resources had been allocated not for war, but for peace and for cities. If steps had been taken together with the Kurdish people for a common homeland and a democratic republic, if the peace process had not been suspended and Mr. Öcalan had not been subjected to absolute isolation, we would perhaps be living in a completely different country today. Perhaps these discussions would never have emerged. Therefore, the public needs an explanation.

It is known that the IYI Party has long been ignoring the HDP. Do you expect this policy to continue?

There is still uncertainty, but when the 'Table of Six' (Nation Alliance) was disbanded on the evening of March 2, the public reaction and backlash were not directed against the HDP. On the contrary, public opinion emerged that this issue could be resolved with the HDP, and therefore, I think that Akşener added new topics, such as the resolution of the Kurdish question and resumption of negotiations with the HDP, to her agenda when she came back to the table. Because the public backlash was not directed against the HDP, but against the IYI Party and its pro-government position over certain issues. For this reason, I do not think that the opposition alliance can turn a blind eye to the HDP's struggle for democratization and its stance on democracy from now on. It is a fact that since the day it was founded, the IYI Party has taken a nationalist stance against the Kurdish people and the HDP, and even a racist rhetoric reminiscent of the ultra-nationalist government ally MHP. I think that the opposition parties are going to address this attitude.

HDP co-chairs stated that the candidate issue would be reconsidered. They said they expected a visit to the party headquarters by Kılıçdaroğlu. So, how will the HDP take a stand on the candidate issue?

In 2018, our presidential candidate, Selahattin Demirtaş, could not pursue his campaign because he was in prison. He reached all candidates except Erdoğan, only through letters and social media. Kılıçdaroğlu is

very likely to visit our party. If we happen to nominate a candidate, he/she will definitely visit the opposition candidates. This is quite normal. After all, the main issue for all of us today is to get rid of the current one-man regime and to democratize Turkey. We see that there is a climate of reconciliation regarding democratization in Turkey. We believe that the only way to do it is through negotiations. Therefore, these talks could also address certain issues.

What are these issues?

These issues concern the rule of law, putting an end to all this injustice and achieving democratization in Turkey. We do not have any other expectations or prospects. We have been revealing our position very clearly for a long time. In fact, our strategy document has already been declared to the public a year and a half ago. It was our party which first revealed its position on the issue.

We were going to announce our presidential candidate before the earthquake. Unfortunately, devastating earthquakes occurred, and we suffered a lot. Our priority was, of course, to deal with the disaster. In the earthquake-hit cities where there was no state, only solidarity could help survivors. This was our priority, and we have accomplished it. While we were going through this whole process, the earthquakes affected politics in the country. It will continue to affect us in the future. In fact, this will be the most urgent agenda of the new government. We said that we would re-evaluate the candidate issue for the sake of the common interest of the peoples of Turkey. Our committees are now working on it. The Labour and Freedom Alliance, of which we are a part, will also address the issue. Depending on the situation, we will either nominate a candidate or support the joint candidate of the democratic forces.

Do you mean Kılıçdaroğlu?

If the candidate of the opposition parties is a joint candidate of the democratic forces, then this will be a determining factor in our evaluations. If not, then we can go on our way with a candidate who can meet the expectations of the democratic forces, the peoples of Turkey and the Kurdish people. We've made it very clear from the very beginning. Of course, we congratulate Kılıçdaroğlu and wish him success.

Electoral campaigns have not officially started, but we saw racism and hostility towards the Kurds during the Amedspor - Bursa Spor football match. MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli congratulated Bursaspor, praised the racist hooligans and those detained for involvement in the attack have been released. Do you think that the government will continue these attacks as the elections are looming?

We know that this is a century-old state tradition against the Kurds. This century-old state tradition feeds on fascism, state of emergency, martial law and junta. The state continues to defend the status quo that it has created. The state tries to protect the status quo with all its apparatus in a stadium, on a street or in a group talk. The struggle and resistance of an organized society showed that this can no longer be sustained.

There may be similar racist attacks during the election process, but they will all fail. Because it is not bearable anymore. Such a government, system and order cannot be tolerated. There is also tremendous hope that people will get rid of this mentality through a common struggle. Of course, our job is not easy. As long as this order is maintained, oppression, poverty, hunger, war and death will prevail in the country.

The democracy forces should invent the necessary response during this election process. It should be noted that the negotiations, solidarity and struggle that will emerge during the election process should contribute to the construction of another Turkey. If it is restricted to the election campaign, things will not change. This may cause major problems for both Turkey and the Middle East.”

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Muslim: The Turkish state must be stopped

NUJIYAN ADAR | HESEKE | 11 MARCH 2023

The co-chairman of the Democratic Unity Party (PYD), Salih Muslim, spoke to ANF on the current issues, including the visit of the US Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley, to the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria last week. Milley’s visit to a US base last Saturday caused an uproar in Turkey, and according to media reports, the US ambassador was summoned by the Turkish Foreign Ministry.

The Turkish state has continued its attacks even after the earthquakes. How are the Kurds supposed to understand this?

The strategic policy of the Turkish state is to end the existence of the Kurdish people. Under whatever circumstances, they do not stop attacking the Kurdish people. They even see earthquakes as a gift they receive. The attacks on Rojava have not stopped. There are continuous reconnaissance flights over the region. Attacks continue from the air and from the land. The fact that the artillery bombardment has not stopped is particularly noteworthy in Shehba, because the region has been affected by the earthquake. Drone attacks have taken place. The earthquake was strongly felt in Tel Rifat. Our people had to leave their houses, but the attacks did not stop. The Kurdish people must see, understand and comprehend this picture. Our people are wanted to be driven out of their land.

The US Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley, visited US troops in the region a week ago. What is the significance of this visit?

The US has soldiers here and they have the right to a visit. In all countries where they have troops, such visits have happened before and will continue to happen. It is not an extraordinary situation. It is something quite normal. It was a visit to review the actions of US troops, new changes and security. After this visit, many comments were made. In Turkey, it was claimed that it was a visit to support the SDF [Syrian Democratic Forces]. The area does not belong to Turkey and the Turkish state has no right to interfere in this visit. The visit is open to many interpretations. One can ask why, for what purpose, but we have no clear information and do not know if there was a meeting with the SDF. The SDF has not made any statement in this direction. We consider it a normal visit. There have been such visits before.

What is the impact of this visit on the joint fight against ISIS? How much mobility does ISIS have in the region?

ISIS has not yet disappeared from the face of the earth. It has many supporters. Some of them supply weapons, others provide logistics and others give money. In the Turkish-occupied areas, the ISIS mentality

is predominant and there is a so-called life with this ideology there. The more weaknesses arise in the fight against ISIS, the stronger ISIS will become. Undoubtedly, it is the SDF who have fought against ISIS so far and continue their fight uninterruptedly. If the danger posed by ISIS still exists in our area today, this danger is also to be feared for other countries. On the one hand, ISIS wants to slaughter the Kurdish people. On the other hand, it continues its hatred and agitation against the peoples. It is good for the USA to fight this battle, because it too has its own interests at stake. If this struggle is not waged, their people will also be threatened. In my opinion, the common struggle should be continued. US officials have also already stated this. The power behind ISIS is clear. One has seen how the ISIS attacks have increased in parallel with the attacks of the Turkish state. Action must be taken against the Turkish state, which supports ISIS. There is a great weakness in this regard. It is in the hands of the international powers to close this gap. In addition to the fight against ISIS, there must also be a joint fight against the Turkish state and other forces that support ISIS. We believe that ISIS will always exist as long as the forces that feed it and help it to grow and develop are not fought.

After the earthquakes, a delegation of the Barzani Foundation travelled to Turkish-occupied Afrin. How is this to be understood?

The KDP has never considered the Turkish state as an enemy, but the Turkish state has always considered the Kurds as enemies. Even the aid delivered by the Barzani Foundation to Afrin was confiscated by the gangs. We do not think that this decision of the KDP is right. They go to the region occupied by the Turkish state and its gangs. All these gangs are against the existence of the Kurdish people. They massacre, kidnap and torture Kurds every day, and they visit these gangs. This visit is tantamount to legitimising the occupation by the gangs. The Kurdish people absolutely do not accept this legitimisation of the gangs. It is not known what specific interests they have with the Turkish state, but this visit should not have taken place under any circumstances. They know the rights violations in Afrin, they know how the population structure has been changed. Not even twenty percent of the population can still live on their own land. The people live in tents in the neighbouring Shehba region and wait for the day when Afrin is liberated. Why don't they visit the people who were driven out of Afrin? Why don't they visit the people in Shehba? Why don't they heal the wounds of the people living here? Why do they visit the areas occupied by the gangs and legitimise this occupation?

How should the dialogues between the government in Damascus and the Arab states be treated and how could they be reflected in the autonomous administration?

The dialogues with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Qatar should be conducted in accordance with the peoples' wishes and for their good. It is not right to still be on the stage while looting, massacre and famine are rampant. Until the Syrian regime and policies change, political steps will not be healthy. The Syrian regime still does not comply with UN Resolution 2254 [This calls for a cessation of all hostilities, respect for Syria's sovereignty and a political solution for Syria]. It does not accept the Autonomous Administration model and does not consider it as an alternative solution. In my opinion, the regime's political negotiations serve no purpose under these conditions. Without political change and steps for democratisation, political steps will not find a place.

As the PYD, we were the first to hold talks with Arab countries, but they withdrew. We were the ones who wanted to solve the problems in Syria together and without the interference of other countries. They did not act according to their duties and responsibilities. At that time, the Arab countries that did not accept

the regime's system supported the people, considered their demands to be right and stood against the regime. Today, nothing has changed in the regime's policy. Why are talks being held without the condition of democratisation? We are not against these talks. We are in favour of strengthening relations between Syria and the Arab countries, but the talks and dialogues must be based on a solid foundation. The dialogues must develop within the framework of protecting the rights of the Syrian people. That would be solid and proper dialogue. The rights of the Syrian people must be protected. If such a dialogue develops, it would mean that we can be partners in difficult times.

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Andok: Democratic Confederalism is the solution - PART ONE

PIRAN DOZDAR / XEBATKAR RAPERIN | BEHDINAN | 14 MARCH 2023

Democratic Confederalism as a radical democratic alternative to capitalist modernity and state society has proven time and time again that it is not a utopia after the abolition of the state model, but a form of self-organization and self-defense based on ecological, women-liberating and communal principles.

The first practical experiences with the implementation of democratic confederalism were made in Northern Kurdistan. The Rojava model was built on these experiences based on the principles of the Kurdish mastermind Abdullah Öcalan.

In the first part of the three-part ANF interview, KCK Executive Council Member Xebat Andok talked about the importance of Democratic Confederalism and how it came about.

What is Democratic Confederalism?

Democratic Confederalism is a system in which democratic society becomes organized. It is not a movement or a party, but constitutes a social system. It can be applicable to Kurdistan as well as Turkey, Iraq, Iran or Syria. Looking at it from an even more general perspective, it can also be applied to the Middle East as a whole, Europe, America and Africa. The KCK [Kurdistan Democratic Communities Union] represents the Democratic Confederalism of Kurdistan. The same can be possible in Iran, Iraq, Syria or any other country. If all the peoples, ethnicities, cultural groups, religious beliefs, etc. in the Middle East, in short, all of society and all peoples in the Middle East, want to take such a system as a basis, then it is possible to establish this kind of confederalism throughout the Middle East. For example, under the name 'Middle East Democratic Peoples Confederalism' or any other name. It is also possible to establish similar systems in America, Europe, Africa or another continent. If this system is established on a global scale, we could refer to it as the 'World Democratic Peoples Confederalism'. It is a system in which all segments of society, from local to universal, from small to large, organize themselves and establish their self-administration.

We could refer to what you just said as the general definition of Democratic Confederalism. But what is its content?

Since this is an alternative system to the existing nation-states and the ruling state system in general, it is based on and defends the organization of the people and society as a whole. It is important to note that it consists of two basic words: One is democratic/democracy and the other is confederalism. Confederalism is a very flexible system of relations based on voluntarism. It does not include any form of written constitution. It does not involve obligation. The unions formed within this system are entirely voluntary, just like the decision to separate from them.

Who comes together on the basis of the flexibility and voluntarism you just mentioned?

Demos, the people. Society can consist of many different ethnic communities, religious beliefs, cultural groups, men and women, any organization that has come together to solve any problem of society, etc. In short, on this basis, all segments of society, the demos, the people, govern themselves. They are the ones who govern. They are not ruled by outsiders, by hegemons. It is a system where all social segments come together in the context of confederal relations on the basis of a system of self-administration. This has two foundations:

- All segments of society need to become organized.
- All parts of this organized society need to be in a relationship with each other.

Their form of relationship constitutes confederalism. There is no space for any relationships based on oppression, force or ideological hegemony. It is a union established on an equal and free basis. This is its confederal dimension.

Another crucial point is that it has to be an organized community. When we speak about all the segments of society, this can mean even the smallest units and all identities or ethnic groups. They organize themselves autonomously on the basis of an understanding of local democracy and come together on the basis of a confederal relationship in order to establish a stronger unity. Therefore, Democratic Confederalism is a system in which all social segments in Kurdistan, the region and around the world organize themselves and at the same time, by establishing relations with each other, organize together as a society outside of the state. This is a local as well as a universal system of social organization. It is a system of social organization that is applicable to Kurdistan as well as to the Middle East, the whole world, all the peoples and the oppressed people of the world.

How does this form of democratic organization and organized democratic society come about?

We are not talking about an organizational system based on a centrally managed parliamentary system. This system is completely different from all existing forms of state. It starts from the smallest unit, for example, a village, a street, street organizations, village organizations or factory organizations, home organizations. In short, it bases itself on the organization of all the different kinds of associations formed by people.

The smallest unit of organization is the commune. A commune means that all aspects of life in a specific place are being lived as a commune. On the other hand, it constitutes the smallest unit of direct democracy, where people directly govern themselves. The commune is the smallest form of assembly. Therefore, in the KCK Charter and in the existing theory of Democratic Confederalism, the commune corresponds more to street and village assemblies. Let's say many villages come together, then beyond them a small town assembly can, for example, be formed. The whole society must come together, all their issues are common problems and it is necessary to find common solutions to them. That is why, for example, organizational structures on the district level can be established above the villages and towns, provincial organizational structures on the next level and regional structures at the provincial level. And at the next higher level, for example, there can be the people's assembly of a country. This can also be established at an inter-country level. Therefore, there can be assemblies on a regional level. Then again, on a people-wide level, which would be the people's congress, i.e. the highest decision-making body on behalf of a people. If different peoples come together, this would be a congress of peoples. In the most general sense, let's say, on a global level, this would be the congress of all the peoples of the world.

In short, we are talking about a system of assemblies. Not just one single parliament. In Turkey, for example, there is only one parliament. Everything is based on appointments. The system we are talking about is completely different from that. For example, in Turkey or North Kurdistan there is one parliament, not two, three or five parliaments. In Germany, there is a federalist system which includes more than one parliament. In the USA there is yet another system. But the system we are talking about is not like any of these examples. It is a system in which thousands, maybe tens of thousands of communes and assemblies are involved, all of them discussing all their problems in their own living space and trying to find solutions. But at the same time, all of them are interconnected. Therefore, to put it another way, Democratic Confederalism is also a system of assemblies. It is a system of direct democracy. It is a system where no one governs anyone else. It is a system where everyone governs themselves and each other. It is not a system where someone is in charge and someone is ruled, where someone is the ruler and someone the one being ruled. It is a system in which everyone, in accordance with the definition of a political and moral human, ponders the problems of society, searches for solutions, speaks out, discusses, makes decisions and assigns someone to put these decisions into practice. It is a system where the authority and power rest entirely with the people. It is a system of direct democracy. This system can also be defined as radical democracy because it is non-state.

We can also define it as communal democracy, because it is based on a communal mentality and life. The understanding of democracy here does not mean only raising and lowering hands or having a say in the decision-making process. It means that the spirit and way of life are also different. Life in this system is based on free and equal relations. If we want to express this in one single sentence: It is a system in which there is a unity of differences based on equality. There is unity. Because society must be united. The unity of who? The unity of what? The unity of differences! Here, all differences preserve their different identities. No one is more important or less important than the other, as in nation-state structures. One is not an object and the other a subject. One is not the ruler and the other the ruled. In this system, everyone exists based on their own differences and uniqueness. On the other hand, the way that relationships are formed is also equal. There is no superiority of one person over another. Therefore, this system can also be defined as unity of differences based on equality.

Who Are We?

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

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

Campaigns

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

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

Publications

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

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

It edits books on Öcalan that discuss his main ideas.

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

Conferences

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

Delegations

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

Lobbying

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

Art for Öcalan

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

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