

# THE İMRALI POST

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

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# Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

## New sit-in in front of the UN Office in Geneva to demand freedom for Öcalan

ANF | GENEVA | 20 APRIL 2023

As part of the “Dem Dema Azadiyê” initiative, the Kurds and their friends have been holding a sit-in every Wednesday in front of the United Nations (UN) Office in Geneva. The action started on 25 January 2021 to demand freedom for Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan.

During the sit-in around the tent in Place des Nations Square, Abdullah Öcalan's books were distributed to the people.

This week's action paid tribute to Hüseyin Türelî, who was killed in Duhok on 17 April, Bilal Mihemed Elî (Botan Goyî), who died in Zap on 7 April, Sevîlay Akyıldırım (Hêjar Zozan), who fell a martyr in Serhed on 16 April, and martyr Orhan Kalabalık (Bager Baz).

Mehmet Latif Çelebi, co-chair of the Geneva Democratic Kurdish Community Center, said that no news about Abdullah Öcalan has been heard for more than 25 months and added that the actions organized within this framework were insufficient. Çelebi said: “While this severe isolation torture on our Leader continues to increase, so are the attacks on the resistance areas where the Kurdish Freedom guerrillas are resisting.”

Çelebi said that the attacks continued despite the PKK's suspension of military actions. Referring to the elections to be held on 14 May in Turkey, Çelebi drew attention to their importance and called for participation in the electoral events to be organized.

### Call to attend “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” panel tomorrow

Co-chair Tuba Yılmaz called on everyone to attend the “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” panel to be held at the Rumine Palace as part of the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne tomorrow, 21 April.

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## Ministry of Justice says “unforeseeable reasons” responsible for two-year silence from İmralı

ANF | 20 APRIL 2023

There has been no news from Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan for more than two years.

Öcalan was able to make a short phone call with his brother Mehmet Öcalan on 25 March 2021. Likewise, no news can be received from other prisoners in İmralı, Hamili Yıldırım, Veysi Aktaş and Ömer Hayri Konar.

While the visits are arbitrarily and systematically denied, the disciplinary punishments motivating these denials are given to the lawyers very late.

The lawyers made an individual application to the Constitutional Court (AYM), stating that their clients have been subjected to ill-treatment due to aggravated isolation, especially since 2021.

In the last 8 years, dozens of applications have been made to the Constitutional Court by Asrın Law Office.

According to The Mezopotamya Agency (MA), the Constitutional Court asked the Ministry of Justice for an opinion on 23 of these applications.

The Ministry presented an opinion to the Constitutional Court on lawyer bans, family disciplinary bans, telephone rights, bans in İmralı during the State of Emergency (OHAL) and many similar issues.

It was reported that the Constitutional Court also requested the opinion of Asrın Law Office on 23 files.

In the opinion submitted by the Ministry to the Constitutional Court on 24 March, it was claimed that the isolation in İmralı was not “ill-treatment”.

Claiming that ill-treatment was “relative”, the Ministry recalled the decisions regarding the obstacles and found the isolation “light” and argued that there was no “ill-treatment” in İmralı.

The Ministry claimed that the rights to family and lawyer visits, telephone calls, receiving and sending letters were also implemented in accordance with the legislation.

The Ministry drew attention to the fact that family and lawyer visits were not made because “it is rather normal that Abdullah Öcalan and the other applicants in the same penitentiary institution had no meetings with their families and lawyers because of unforeseeable reasons, and because strict security measures were taken (...)”

In the ministry’s response, no clarification was made as to what these “unforeseeable reasons” were.

The Constitutional Court asked the lawyers of Asrın Law Office for an opinion on 3 April, after the Ministry gave its opinion.

The lawyers noted that the arguments put forward by the Ministry regarding the rejection of family and lawyer visits do not reflect the truth.

According to MA, the lawyers referred to the Benali-Libya decision of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee, and said that the UN’s prohibition of torture was violated by preventing the visits by family and lawyers, and that such a situation was described as “incommunicado (absolute lack of communication)”.

The lawyers underlined that contrary to the claims of the Ministry, their applications should be handled within the scope of Article 17 of the Constitution (ill treatment, prohibition of torture).

Pointing to the international and national legislation, the lawyers emphasized that the rights of Abdullah Öcalan and other clients were usurped in this context. They also underlined that the conditions and treatments that can break the physical and moral resistance of a person are related to the prohibition of “ill-treatment”.

It is not known when the Constitutional Court, which has left lawyers’ applications unanswered for years, will decide on these latest applications.

## Lawyers and families of Öcalan and other prisoners in Imrali apply for visit

ANF | ISTANBUL | 21 APRIL 2023

Leader Abdullah Öcalan's family, lawyers and guardian applied for a visit on the occasion of the end of the month of Ramadan.

Lawyers Ibrahim Bilmez, Raziye Öztürk, Emran Emekçi and Cengiz Yürekli, from Asrın Law Office, applied for a visit.

The lawyers applied to the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and the Directorate of Imrali Penitentiary Institution to meet with Abdullah Öcalan, Ömer Hayri Konar, Hamili Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş.

Abdullah Öcalan's brother Mehmet Öcalan and his guardian Mazlum Dinç as well as prisoners Ömer Hayri Konar's brother Ali Konar, Hamili Yıldırım's brother Polat Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş's sister, Melihe Çetin also applied to Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and the Directorate of Imrali Penitentiary Institution for a visit.

There has been no news from Leader Abdullah Öcalan since 25 March 2021.

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## Kalkan: The CPT is a committee that legitimizes torture

ANF | BEHDINAN | 21 APRIL 2023

Duran Kalkan, a member of the KCK Executive Council, spoke about various issues in a recent long interview. Among other things, Kalkan spoke about the isolation imposed on the Kurdish people's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, and said that "the CPT is a committee that legitimizes torture."

Kalkan said: "This is not an ordinary situation there [on the Turkish prison island of Imrali]. It is a very important situation that concerns not only the Kurds but all oppressed peoples, especially women and the working population. A historical struggle is taking place there. The isolation [of Abdullah Öcalan] is implemented on this basis. There are no new developments with regards to the isolation. There have been absolutely no changes. The political agenda in Turkey is changing, there are the upcoming elections and the ongoing war. It is debatable whether these things are really changing anything. These things happen, but is there really a change with regards to the political agenda? We think that this needs to be discussed. Real politics are not changing. There is no change in Imrali and in the torture, isolation and genocide system. But these are the real factors that determine politics in Turkey."

Kalkan added: "Now, there is lots of talk about the upcoming elections. Yet, there are no changes. There was the issue of the CPT going to İmralı, which has been discussed since last September. Finally, the CPT announced that it had finished its report and had sent it to the Turkish administration in March [2023]. This is the last statement on the isolation, the İmralı torture and genocide system. But there is no information about the content of this report. There is no information about what is included in it and what isn't. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture simply says 'we sent it to them, the rest is up to the Turkish state'. That is, to the AKP-MHP fascist government. In other words, it is up to those who implement this isolation, the system of oppression and genocide in İmralı. The rest, they say, is up to them. Whether they publish it or not, whether they provide accurate information about its content or not. This is a remarkable situation. They [AKP-MHP government] are the ones who impose the isolation and run this system. If the CPT has taken decisions regarding the torture situation in İmralı during its visit to Turkey, there is no point in telling the AKP-MHP fascist dictatorship or the Turkish state about this. Because they are the ones doing all this. Those who are doing it, of course, know what is happening. What is the point of telling them what they are doing? They are doing all this on purpose. They [CPT] say that these are their rules, but we really cannot understand these rules. This has nothing to do with freedom and democracy and cannot be considered to be rules. If there is going to be a decision on the practices of the Turkish state and the AKP-MHP government in İmralı, this should at least be announced by the CPT. The CPT needs to create pressure, and its report should be sent to more institutions. It sends it to the perpetrator as if they didn't know, and says that they are free to do whatever they want with it. They are the ones carrying out torture and implementing the isolation. Therefore, they won't do anything."

Kalkan continued: "They will just put the report on the shelf. The CPT has made this statement in order to relieve the pressure created by the protests of the Kurdish people and their international friends. But this did not work. It looks like they are doing something, but in fact they are not. There is deception and trickery involved. Thus, the CPT has given itself away more and more. It should not be like this. This is what the current situation looks like: The İmralı system is carried out in collaboration [of the Turkish state and international powers and institutions]. For 25 years, the isolation and torture of Kurds and the İmralı system have been carried out in collaboration. For more than 2 years, the complete isolation has also been carried out in collaboration.

Nevertheless, we need to expose them. This is a so-called legal system and democratic rule of law. But, all of this has nothing to do with democracy. There cannot be such a law that actually gives all kinds of authority to the torturer. The persecuted and the oppressed do not have any rights. It looks like there are rights, but in fact this [CPT] is a committee that legitimizes torture and cannot say anything to the torturers. So how will this committee prevent torture if it doesn't say anything to the torturer? The situation on İmralı is not only the work of the Turkish state. It also reveals today's state of European democracy and law. There is a unity [among these forces], and we need to emphasize this. We must not give up the legal struggle, but the main thing is, of course, the ideological and political struggle. The protests and activities continue. Lately, there have been important initiatives. All over the world, Kurdish people, their international friends, revolutionary democratic forces and intellectuals are standing up and marching for the freedom of Leader Apo [Abdullah Öcalan]. In other words, there is an attitude of support and unity of action for Leader Apo spreading from Amara [the village where Abdullah Öcalan was born] to all four corners of the world. The April 4th celebrations [birthday of Abdullah Öcalan] were indeed numerous and strong. They show how society, the Kurdish people and democratic circles are united with Leader Apo. Shortly after that, an important conference was held in Hamburg where Leader Apo's ideas were discussed under

the title 'Challenging Capitalist Modernity'. Undoubtedly, the idea that challenges capitalist modernity is the theory of democratic modernity. Leader Apo developed this theory, which was discussed at this conference. Very important and serious discussions took place there among the world's intellectuals, democratic revolutionary forces and libertarian democratic circles. This means that even though AKP-MHP fascism, with the support of the CPT, Europe and NATO, has tried to impose an unprecedented isolation, Leader Apo has broken this isolation. He has broken the walls of İmralı. He has thus shared his thoughts with women, youths, workers, laborers and all oppressed people all over the world. Support for Leader Apo is growing and spreading like an avalanche all over the world today. The efforts to understand, adopt, integrate and put into practice the thoughts and thesis of Leader Apo is growing like an avalanche and spreading all over the world. This includes all the oppressed, especially women. This is what is important, what is essential. This is what will destroy the İmralı torture and isolation system. This happened in a much more comprehensive way on the occasion of Leader Apo's birthday this year. And it will continue in the future. In fact, it is precisely this struggle that determines politics and will bring about lasting results. This struggle will destroy the İmralı torture and isolation system, tear down the walls of İmralı, destroy fascism, make Turkey democratic and Kurdistan free. Thus, it will make the most important contribution in history to humanity's march towards freedom."

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## Prisons in Turkey

### Kurdish politician Ayşe Gökkan sentenced to 22,5 years in prison

ANF | AMED | 19 APRIL 2023

Kurdish politician Ayşe Gökkan, imprisoned in Turkey, has failed for the time being with her appeal against her sentence to more than two decades in prison.

Gökkan had been sentenced to 22 years and 6 months in prison on so-called terror charges by the 9th Criminal Chamber in Diyarbakır in October 2021. A regional court of appeal in Amed (tr. Diyarbakır) confirmed the verdict in the first instance on Wednesday.

The sentence is made up of several sentences: twelve years for alleged leadership of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), seven and a half years for alleged membership of the same organisation and three years for alleged PKK propaganda.

Ayşe Gökkan was born in the Suruç district of Urfa in 1965 and studied journalism. She has been arrested more than 80 times, and the preliminary proceedings against her were usually based on so-called terror charges. In 2009, Gökkan was elected mayor of Mardin's Nusaybin district with 83 percent of the vote. Most of the investigations against her occurred during her term of office. Gökkan was elected spokesper-

son of the Free Women's Movement (TJA) in February 2020. In December of that year, she was sentenced to eighteen months in prison in Mardin. In the trial she was accused of being in a restricted military area and causing damage to property. The charge stems from an act of civil obedience in October 2013. At the time, Gökkan was mayor of Nusaybin and protested against the construction of a wall with a hunger strike on the border with Syria.



## Ill prisoners in Edirne F Type undergo surgery in handcuffs

ANF | 20 APRIL 2023

Torture and rights violations against prisoners continue to emerge in different jails of the country.

Nevzat Özer and Hüseyin Özen are imprisoned in Edirne F Type Prison. They told about the rights violations they experienced in prison in letters they wrote.

### Put in isolation cell after surgery

The letter also conveyed the information that prisoner Ercan Kartal suffered a heart attack twice and underwent surgery in handcuffs at Tekirdağ City Hospital. The arrest of Mehmet Gövel from TAYAD, who suffers from prostate cancer, is also an indication of how violations are carried out on a daily basis.

Özer said: "Two people staying in the same cell cannot write a letter to their mutual friend. When we ask why, the only answer we get is that it is 'forbidden'. The recent increases in stamps also make it very difficult for us to write letters and faxes. We are faced with many violations like these that aggravate our isolation. Our right to chat, access to books and publications, letters, telephone and visits is restricted. The right to treatment is prevented by impositions such as not removing the handcuffs in the hospital. Prisoners are handcuffed to the soldier or to the stretcher. Those who are sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment are taken to the yard for one hour a day."

Reminding experts' statements saying that staying in a cell for more than 40 days is harmful to human health, the letter said: "However, the prisoners are sentenced to stay in these cells for life. Isn't this death penalty spread over time? One of the most important issues is the obstacles to the treatment of ill prisoners. There are 1,517 prisoners, 651 of whom are seriously ill. They have been forced to live in severe isolation conditions in prisons. Don't you think that not releasing hundreds of seriously ill prisoners who cannot survive on their own is condemning them to death? Only in 2022, more than 76 prisoners lost their lives because their treatment was denied. Aren't those who turned a blind eye to all these deaths responsible for these deaths with their heavy isolation practices?"

Özer's letter pointed out that prisons are places built to implement isolation. Hüseyin Özen, who stated that the prison administration was engaged in arbitrary practices, said: "After the censorship law, they continue to show that they do not recognize any law. They prevent us from writing letters to our friends in another prison."





## Seriously ill prisoner Gulistan Abdo not treated

ANF | 21 APRIL 2023

Gulistan Abdo, a seriously ill political prisoner who was born in Afrin and was caught injured in the Ömerli district of Merdin (Merdin) in 1994, was arrested on charges of "membership in a terrorist organization". Abdo's left leg was amputated as the wound was not treated for years. She has to live with the prosthesis for life. Abdo was deported to prisons in Amed, Sivas and Siirt, before being deported to Gebze M Type Women's Closed Prison 12 years ago. Her prosthesis was first replaced in 2010. Then, in 2021, was replaced for the second time. The prosthesis works with batteries and needs to be replaced frequently. However, this is not happening.

### **She broke her head but was not treated**

Having a hard time living with the prosthesis, Abdo has problems and often falls and gets new injuries when she tries to move alone. In 2020, she badly hurt her head and suffered a serious fracture. However, neither doctor's checks were made nor requests to free her were accepted. Her check-ups and examinations were prevented by the excuse of a lack of soldiers to accompany her. Now Abdo cannot walk as the batteries of the prosthesis are not changed.

Gulistan Abdo is on the list compiled by the Human Rights Association (IHD) of "severely ill prisoners". She has been in jail for 29 years, and the IHD said she needs to be released as soon as possible.



## Military aggression and occupation

### YBŞ: Çarşema Sor will be more meaningful with the building of the Autonomous Shengal

ANF | SHENGAL | 19 APRIL 2023

The Shengal Resistance Units (YBŞ) released a written statement to mark Çarşema Sor (Red Wednesday, celebrated on the first Wednesday of the new year, April, according to the Yazidi belief).

The statement said that Çarşema Sor was welcomed every year as the beginning of a new life. The YBŞ called attention to the attacks, dirty plans and conspiracies against the people and emphasized that the purpose of these attacks and plans was to destroy the faith and sacraments of the Yazidis.

The statement continued: "They want to destroy all the values of humanity by targeting our people with attacks. However, despite all these dirty plans and attacks, our people have not given up their faith. On the contrary, they have represented humanity even more."

The statement remarked that a heavy price was paid for the celebration of Çarşema Sor with great enthusiasm. "For 9 years, our people have been celebrating this day with a unique struggle that emerged after the Yazidi genocide."

The YBŞ stressed that Çarşema Sor would be more meaningful with the building of the Autonomous Shengal. It said: "Come together and protect your beliefs, values and religion."

The YBŞ also commemorated the heroes of the Yazidis with respect, and congratulated the families of the martyrs, the Yazidi people and all their comrades on Çarşema Sor.

The statement concluded: "As YBŞ and YJŞ, we reiterate our promise that we will turn every holiday into a struggle for freedom and a free life through the unity and solidarity of our people."

## Red Wednesday

"Çarşema Sor" in Kurdish means "Red Wednesday". "Çarşem" consists of the Kurdish words "çar" for "four" and "şem" for "week", meaning the "fourth day of the week", which is Wednesday. "Sor" means red. The day is also called "Sersal" (Kurdish "ser": up, head and/or top; and "sal": year), meaning "New Year".

## New year time

The Yazidi New Year is celebrated on the first Wednesday in April, which, according to the Yazidi calendar, is always the first day of April and the New Year. Since the Yazidi calendar follows the Gregorian calendar by 13 days, the New Year is celebrated on the first Wednesday in April, which falls on or after April 14th in the Gregorian calendar. In Kurdish, the month of April is called "Nîsan". The first day of the month "Nîsan" is the "Çarşema Sor".

## Mythology

According to Yazidi mythology, the "Red Wednesday" is the day on which the creation of the earth was completed: The sun's rays reached the earth for the first time, turning the firmament red. The name "Red Wednesday" comes from this. Furthermore, it was the day on which the head of the Yazidi archangels, Tawisî Melek (God's angel), first came to earth. Tawisî Melek is the center of the seven archangels, so he represents Wednesday, the middle of the week or the center of the seven archangels. Wednesday is the rest day of the Yazidis, similar to Sunday for Christians.

## Turkish forces attack aid teams in Ain Issa

ANF | AIN ISSA | 19 APRIL 2023

A fuel tanker rolled over last night near the Dibis village of Ain Issa. Following the crash, the M4 Highway was closed to traffic for more than 2 hours and most of the fuel carried by the overturned tanker was spilled all over.

When the Internal Security Forces and Ain Issa's People's Municipality teams arrived at the scene for help, they were targeted by the Turkish state forces with medium machine guns.

The spilled fuel could not be cleaned up, putting the lives of drivers using the M4 Highway in jeopardy.

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## KCK: Hüseyin Türeli was assassinated by MIT with the support of Parastin

ANF | BEHDINAN | 19 APRIL 2023

The Co-Presidency of the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) Executive Council released a statement on the murder of a Kurdish patriot in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The victim, Huseyin Türeli, who had fled Turkey for political reasons, was shot dead in Duhok on Monday evening.

The KCK statement released on Wednesday includes the following:

“Hüseyin Türeli, a patriot from Batman, has recently died as a result of an armed attack in Dohuk. Many patriotic organizations have strongly condemned this attack and expressed their protest. According to the available information, Hüseyin Türeli, like many patriots from North Kurdistan [East Turkey], had moved to South Kurdistan [North Iraq] for political reasons before being murdered in the recent attack.

Hüseyin Türeli had been attacked before in Dohuk. The fact that he was now attacked for the second time and the manner in which the attack took place shows that the Turkish state and MIT [Turkish secret service] made a definite decision to assassinate Hüseyin Türeli and that this attack was carried out with the support of the Parastin [KDP secret service]. In all the assassinations and massacres carried out by the MIT in South Kurdistan, Parastin's cooperation and support are clearly visible. The fact that no measures had been taken although it was well-known that Hüseyin Türeli was a target of the Turkish state and MIT and that he was murdered during this second attack reveals this fact. The KDP has never protested in any way against these attacks. The Parastin detains and threatens patriots who cross into South Kurdistan for political reasons, offers them to become spies, and makes it clear to them that they will not be able to survive if they do not give up their patriotism and if they don't cooperate with the Turkish state. Due to its collaborative attitude with the Turkish state, the KDP treats the patriots who flee the persecution of the

AKP-MHP and settle in South Kurdistan in such a way, and collaborates and supports the targeting of them by the MIT. If it were not for the support of the KDP and Parastin, the MIT would not be able to set foot in South Kurdistan, nor would it be able to murder patriots in the cities in public and in the presence of hundreds of cameras and then simply disappear.

The KDP supports the Kurdish genocide policy of the Turkish state everywhere, not only the massacring of patriots in the cities. It has sided with the Turkish state in the occupation of South Kurdistan and in the war against the guerrilla forces in the Medya Defense Zones. The KDP has also supported the attacks in Şengal and Mexmur, and sided with the gangs in Afrin, Serêkani and Girê Spi. The demography of occupied Afrin has been changed. Kurds have been expelled from there and the few remaining Kurds live under the threat of torture and massacre and are subjected to attacks every day. At the same time, the KDP opens official institutions in Afrin under the name of charity. How is this possible? Isn't this a partnership with the invaders and those who carry out the Kurdish genocide? Undoubtedly, the public and the Kurdish people see and know where the KDP stands and what it does.

In North Kurdistan, the KDP is currently working for the victory of the AKP-MHP and the contra groups who are the hitmen of the genocidal colonialist Turkish state. In order to achieve this, the KDP has been meeting with certain people from North Kurdistan and has asked them to support the AKP-MHP and the anti-Kurdish fascist chief Tayyip Erdoğan in the elections. With the help of its media, it openly demonstrates this support, putting on television those who have massacred thousands of Kurdish patriots. These activities of the KDP are well known and monitored by the patriotic people of Kurdistan.

We would like to hereby condemn the attack on Hüseyin Türelî. This attack, like all previous attacks, was carried out by MIT with the support of the Parastin. The aim of these attacks is to intimidate Kurdish patriots. The patriotic people of Kurdistan and all democratic-patriotic organizations need to stand up for Hüseyin Türelî and express their protest more strongly against those who carried out the attack and those who collaborate with them.”

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## Three civilians kidnapped in occupied Afrin

ANF | 20 APRIL 2023

The so-called “Military Police”, a paramilitary criminal network established by the Turkish state in the occupied Afrin region, kidnapped three civilians from the districts of Rajo and Shera.

According to local sources, a 31-year-old resident of the Moska village in Rajo was kidnapped on April 10. His aftermath remains unknown.

In the Shera district, the invaders kidnapped 43-year-old Hisên Mistefa Nûrî Hidik from the village of Dêrsewanê and 36-year-old Aryan Mihemed Xelîl from the village of Meiriskê.

## Afrin occupied since 2018

Afrin Canton was the westernmost canton of Rojava and North and East Syria, home to 200,000 ethnic Kurds. Though the population was overwhelmingly Kurdish, it was home to diverse religious groups including Yazidis, Alawites and Christians alongside Sunni Muslims.

On 20 January 2018, Turkey launched air strikes on 100 locations in Afrin, as the onset of an invasion they dubbed 'Operation Olive Branch.'

The Turkish Airforce indiscriminately shelled civilians as well as YPG/YPJ positions, while a ground assault was carried out by factions and militias organised under the umbrella of the Turkish-backed National Army.

By 15 March, Turkish-backed militias had encircled Afrin city and placed it under artillery bombardment. A Turkish airstrike struck the city's only functioning hospital, killing 16 civilians.

Civilians fled and the SDF retreated, and by 18 March Turkey was in de facto occupation of Afrin. Between 400 and 500 civilians died in the invasion, overwhelmingly as a result of Turkish bombing. Other civilians were summarily executed in the field.

Prior to the Turkish invasion, Afrin had been one of the most peaceful and secure parts of Syria, virtually never seeing combat during the civil war bar occasional skirmishes between YPG/YPJ and jihadi forces on its borders. As a result, Afrin offered peaceful sanctuary to over 300,000 internally displaced people from elsewhere in Syria.



## HPG reports 86 Turkish attacks on guerrilla areas

ANF | BEHDINAN | 20 APRIL 2023

In its daily statement about the war in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq), the press centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) reported 86 attacks by the Turkish invading forces in two days with fighter jets, howitzers and heavy weapons.

HPG denied the Turkish media reports that six guerrillas lost their lives as a result of a recent attack by the Turkish army in the Gare region.

"The Turkish occupation army carried out an extensive air operation in Gare on 18 April and bombed different areas and the surroundings of villages 28 times with fighter jets. The Special War Ministry [Ministry of Defence] claims that we had six casualties in these attacks. However, we have not suffered any casualties at all as a result of these air strikes. Our patriotic people and the public must not give any value to the special war lies of the fascist AKP/MHP regime."

On the other hand, HPG reported that the latest airstrikes targeted the Girê Bahar, the area around the villages of Kanîsarkê, Yekmal, Gûz, Şiyê, Zêvk and Sêdar, the Sîser slopes, the Girê Êgîd and the Deştâ Kafya area.

In addition, the Turkish army attacked a guerrilla position in Sîda in the Zap region with prohibited weapons on 18 April. In the past two days, the Girê Cûdî resistance area and the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sîda were attacked four times with attack helicopters and 57 times with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons.



## Guerrillas respond to Turkish attacks

ANF | BEHDINAN | 21 APRIL 2023

In its daily overview of the war in Kurdistan, the press centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) reported continued attacks by the Turkish occupation forces and confrontations after self-defence actions of the guerrillas in the Medya Defence Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

Four contacts with the enemy occurred on 19 and 20 April in the Girê Cûdî resistance area in the Zap region, when guerrilla fighters responded to attacks carried out by the Turkish army with heavy weapons and howitzers.

In the Girê FM resistance area, guerrillas from YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) exercised their right to self-defence when they were attacked twice with heavy weapons within half an hour of each other on Thursday morning. During the ensuing fighting, YJA Star guerrillas destroyed a grenade launcher used by Turkish troops.

HPG also reported three airstrikes by Turkish fighter jets on the Girê Çarçêl and Golka areas in Metîna and the Girê Amêdî resistance area on 20 April. According to the HPG statement, the Turkish army used a prohibited weapon against a guerrilla position in Sîda. In addition, 68 attacks with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons have been directed against Girê FM, Girê Cûdî, Çemço and Sîda in the past two days.

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.

On March 27, the KCK Executive Council co-chair Besê Hozat announced that the unilateral ceasefire would remain in place until after the elections to be held in Turkey on May 14.

According to the annual balance sheet for the war in the Medya Defence Zones, published by the Central Headquarters of the People's Defence Forces on April 14, the Turkish army carried out 3,730 attacks with chemical and other unconventional bombs on guerrilla areas, 4,233 attacks by combat aircraft and 5,628 attacks by combat helicopters.

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## HPG reports 32 Turkish attacks on guerrilla areas

ANF | BEHDINAN | 22 APRIL 2023

According to the daily statement by the Press Office of the People's Defence Forces (HPG), the Turkish army continues its attacks on guerrilla areas in the Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

HPG reported that the guerrilla positions 32 times from the air and land.

On April 21, the Girê Cûdî Resistance Area in Zap region was attacked by the Turkish army with heavy weapons. Guerrillas of YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) responded to the attack to defend themselves and destroyed a surveillance camera system in the ensuing confrontation.

On April 20, the Turkish army attacked the Girê Hakkâri Resistance area with heavy weapons. Guerrillas responded to the attack in self-defense, resulting in an armed confrontation.

On April 20, 21 and 22, the vicinity of the Sêgirê village in Amediye Resistance Area and the area of Şelazê in Metina region were targeted by 6 aerial bombardments.

On April 20 and 21, the areas of Girê Bahar, Girê FM and Girê Cûdî were targeted by 26 attacks with tanks and heavy weapons.

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.

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## Turkish jets attack a village near Amadiya

ANF | BEHDINAN | 22 APRIL 2023

According to the Sulaymaniyah-based news agency RojNews, the village of Sakarî was targeted by Turkish air strikes on Saturday afternoon. There is no reliable information on the extent of the attacks. Contact with the village has been broken off.

Turkey attacks southern Kurdistan territory on an almost daily basis as Ankara tries to annex the regions of southern Kurdistan controlled by the People's Defence Forces (HPG) to its own national territory. As the guerrilla areas border on civilian settlement areas, the Turkish government pursues a targeted policy of expulsion - above all by destroying the civilian infrastructure and by terrorising the population. Residential areas of the local population are regularly attacked.

Only a week ago on Saturday, three people were killed and another person was seriously injured in a Turkish drone attack in Pêncwên near Sulaymaniyah. HPG reports almost daily air and ground attacks by the Turkish army against the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

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## Five Kurds killed in South Kurdistan in 18 months

ANF | 23 APRIL 2023

Attacks on Kurdish activists and intellectuals continue in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The Turkish news service MIT and Parastin, the secret service of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), are held responsible for the attacks. The main target of these attacks are Kurds who have come to South Kurdistan due to political persecution in Turkey. Five people have been killed in targeted attacks since September 2021. Ji-neoloji activist Nagihan Akarsel was shot dead in Sulaymaniyah on 4 October 2022. On 28 August 2022, the Turkish secret service MIT killed the author and historian Suheyl Xurşîd Ezîz, a member of the General Assembly of the Tevgera Azadî movement, in front of his house in Kifrî. On 17 May 2022, Zeki Çelebi was the victim of an armed attack in front of his restaurant in Sulaymaniyah and succumbed to his injuries a day later. On 17 September 2021, the member of the Committee of the Martyrs' Families, Yasin Bulut (Şükrü Serhed), was murdered in Sulaymaniyah. The day before, Ferhad Bariş Kondu from South Kurdistan was seriously injured in an armed attack in Sulaymaniya. Most recently, Hüseyin Türeli was shot dead in a shopping center in Duhok on 18 April.

Nasır Yağız, representative of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Hewlêr (Erbil), spoke to Mezopotamya Agency (MA) about the attacks.

Yağız said the attacks in South Kurdistan are part of the Turkish state's concept of annihilation against the Kurds and added: "These attacks are aimed at intimidating Kurds. They are carried out by MIT in cooperation with local figures. An attack was carried out on our friend Hüseyin Türeli last week. This political



murder was committed in a shopping centre. To date, the government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has taken no action to prevent the killings.”

The attacks were aimed at Kurdish identity, according to Yağız. “The murdered people are our friends who have political problems and therefore came to South Kurdistan. The Kurdish administration is unable to offer them decent living conditions because they cannot guarantee internal security. It is the South Kurdish KDP government that encourages these dark forces. South Kurdistan should actually be the safest place for Kurds from Northern Kurdistan, but our lives are in constant danger here. The goal of these attacks is the destruction of the resistant free Kurdish identity and existence.”

Yağız also criticized the silence of the United Nations regarding the attacks and stressed that this silence encourages the perpetrators. The HDP representation in Hewlêr has held various talks on this subject, said Yağız, pointing out that politically persecuted people from Turkey in South Kurdistan first apply for asylum at the UNHCR and the UN organization is therefore directly responsible. “The United Nations is not fulfilling its duty and responsibility. Their silence empowers the local government. Kurds cannot be protected in Kurdish areas. MIT has established hundreds of bases in Kurdistan. This is endangering the lives of people who have settled here under UN law.”

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## Drone crashes near Kirkuk

ANF | 23 APRIL 2023

Local media reported that an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) crashed in the village of Reşad, south of Kirkuk. It was a reconnaissance plane.

The International Coalition Against ISIS declared that the plane belonged to them and was sent to Kirkuk to support Iraqi military forces, but crashed due to a technical problem.

It was stated that the coalition and security forces later reached the scene of the accident. There were no casualties.

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## Syrian woman stabbed in Hol Camp

ANF | 23 APRIL 2023

According to the information received from the management of Hol Camp, a group of people hiding their faces in the 6th section of the camp stabbed a Syrian woman.

The name of the woman is Dûa îsmail. She is 27 years old and from Aleppo. Sources reported that Dûa was stabbed in 5 different places. The woman was taken to Heseke Hospital, and her condition is serious.

Hol Camp in the east of Heseke is one of the most dangerous camps in the world. Thousands of ISIS members have their wives and children in the camp. Attacks and murders in the camp are carried out by ISIS women. In addition, Iraqi refugees and refugees from different parts of Syria live in the camp.

The Internal Security Forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces have carried out two humanitarian and security operations in the camp so far.



## HPG: Turkish army continues attacks on guerrilla areas

ANF | BEHDINAN | 23 APRIL 2023

According to the daily statement by the Press Office of the People's Defence Forces (HPG), the Turkish army continues its attacks on guerrilla areas in the Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

HOG reported that the Turkish army attacked guerrilla areas with banned weapons, fighter jets, howitzers, mortars, tanks and heavy weapons.

In the region of Zap, guerrillas responded to a Turkish attack on Girê Cûdî with heavy weapons on April 22. The self-defense of the guerrillas in self-defense resulted in an armed confrontation.

The guerrilla areas in Sîda were attacked with banned weapons on April 22.

On the same day, four air raids with fighter jets were carried out on Girê Cûdî and Girê Amêdî as well as the surroundings of the nearby village of Sêgirê.

Girê FM, Girê Cûdî, Çemço and Sîda were attacked 47 times with howitzers, mortars, tanks and heavy weapons on 21 and 22 April.

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.



## 108 years ago, the Armenian Genocide

ANF | 24 APRIL 2023

In April 1915, the Ottoman government embarked upon the systematic extermination of its civilian Armenian population. The persecutions continued with varying intensity until 1923, when the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist and was replaced by the Republic of Turkey.

The Armenian population of the Ottoman state was reported at about two million in 1915. An estimated one million had perished by 1918, while hundreds of thousands had become homeless and stateless refugees. By 1923, virtually the entire Armenian population of Anatolian Turkey had disappeared.

The Ottoman Empire was ruled by the Turks who had conquered lands extending across West Asia, North Africa and Southeast Europe. The Ottoman government was centered in Istanbul (Constantinople) and was headed by a sultan who was vested with absolute power. The Turks practiced Islam and were a martial people.

The Armenians, a Christian minority, lived as second class citizens subject to legal restrictions which denied them normal safeguards. Neither their lives nor their properties were guaranteed security. As non-Muslims, they were also obligated to pay discriminatory taxes and denied participation in government. Scattered across the empire, the status of the Armenians was further complicated by the fact that the territory of historical Armenia was divided between the Ottomans and the Russians.

When World War I broke out in August 1914, the Ottoman Empire formed part of the Triple Alliance with the other Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, and it declared war on Russia and its Western allies, Great Britain and France.

The Ottoman armies initially suffered a string of defeats, which they made up with a series of easy military victories in the Caucasus in 1918 before the Central Powers capitulated later that same year.

Whether retreating or advancing, the Ottoman army used the occasion of war to wage a collateral campaign of massacre against the civilian Armenian population in the regions in which warfare was being conducted. These measures were part of the genocidal program secretly adopted by the CUP and implemented under the cover of war. They coincided with the CUP's larger program to eradicate the Armenians from Turkey and neighboring countries for the purpose of creating a new Pan-Turanian empire. Through the spring and summer of 1915, in all areas outside the war zones, the Armenian population was ordered deported from their homes. Convoys consisting of tens of thousands, including men, women, and children, were driven hundreds of miles toward the Syrian desert.

The deportations were disguised as a resettlement program. The brutal treatment of the deportees, most of whom were made to walk to their destinations, made it apparent that the deportations were mainly intended as death marches. Moreover, the policy of deportation surgically removed the Armenians from the rest of society and disposed of great masses of people with little or no destruction of property. The displacement process, therefore, also served as a major opportunity orchestrated by the CUP for the plunder-

ing of the material wealth of the Armenians and proved an effortless method of expropriating all of their immovable properties.

The government had made no provisions for the feeding of the deported population. Starvation took an enormous toll, much as exhaustion felled the elderly, the weaker and the ill. Deportees were denied food and water in a deliberate effort to hasten death. The survivors who reached northern Syria were collected at a number of concentration camps whence they were sent further south to die under the scorching sun of the desert. Through methodically organized deportation, systematic massacre, deliberate starvation and dehydration, and continuous brutalization, the Ottoman government reduced its Armenian population to a frightened mass of famished individuals whose families and communities had been destroyed in a single stroke.

Most of those implicated in war crimes evaded justice and many joined the new Nationalist Turkish movement led by Mustafa Kemal. In a series of military campaigns against Russian Armenia in 1920, against the refugee Armenians who had returned to Cilicia in southern Turkey in 1921, and against the Greek army that had occupied Izmir where the last intact Armenian community in Anatolia still existed in 1922, the Nationalist forces completed the process of eradicating the Armenians through further expulsions and massacres. When Turkey was declared a republic in 1923 and received international recognition, the Armenian Question and all related matters of resettlement and restitution were swept aside and soon forgotten.

In all, it is estimated that up to a million and a half Armenians perished at the hands of Ottoman and Turkish military and paramilitary forces and through atrocities intentionally inflicted to eliminate the Armenian demographic presence in Turkey.

The surviving refugees spread around the world and eventually settled in some two dozen countries on all continents of the globe. Triumphant in its total annihilation of the Armenians and relieved of any obligations to the victims and survivors, the Turkish Republic adopted a policy of dismissing the charge of genocide and denying that the deportations and atrocities had constituted part of a deliberate plan to exterminate the Armenians.

(Compiled with information from the Armenian National Institute)

# Femicide

## Many detained in police attack on vigil by Saturday Mothers

ANF | ISTANBUL | 22 APRIL 2023

Turkish police have once again prevented the weekly vigil by Saturday Mothers in Istanbul and detained seventeen members of the initiative, including the co-chair of the Human Rights Association (IHD), Eren Keskin, and the spokesperson of the IHD Prison Commission, Nuray Çevirmen, and Hanım Tosun, wife of Fehmi Tosun, a Kurd who "disappeared" in Istanbul in 1995. Tosun was taken away despite evidence of a recent heart operation and a broken arm. Mikail Kırbayır, İrfan Bilgin, Maside Ocak, Sebla Arcan, Besna Tosun, Ali Tosun, Ali Ocak, Hüseyin Ocak, Yasemin Bektaş, Aylin Tekiner, İkbal Eren, Setenay Yarıcı, Hanife Yıldız and Leman Yurtsever were also taken into custody during the crackdown.

The Galatasaray Square in front of the high school of the same name in the central district of Beyoğlu, where the Saturday Mothers' sit-in was to take place, has been widely cordoned off by police barriers since early morning. Riot police deployed with a large contingent prevented the group from approaching the square. Galatasaray Square is considered a symbolic place for the struggle for human rights in Turkey.

A Twitter message by the Saturday Mothers said: "We have come together on the occasion of Eid to lay red carnations at this symbolic place and remember our loved ones who disappeared in custody. But our peaceful vigils, which we initiate for the clarification of the fate of the missing and for the punishment of the perpetrators, are not allowed despite a ruling by the Constitutional Court. Those responsible are thus violating the law and deliberately ignoring the judiciary."

Visits to the cemetery on Eid are part of the Muslim tradition of breaking the fast. But many of the thousands of people who disappeared in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s do not have a grave where relatives can mourn or say prayers. It is estimated that more than 17,000 "disappeared" people were abducted, tortured and murdered by death squads on behalf of the state during this leaden period. Their bodies were usually buried in mass graves, caves or in disused industrial plants, thrown onto rubbish dumps, sunk into well shafts and acid pits or, as in Argentina, eliminated by being dropped from military helicopters. Most of the victims were Kurds. Often, they had been picked up at home by the police or the army, or they had been ordered to the local police station for a "statement", or they had been detained at a military road check.

In 1995, women in Istanbul took to the streets for the first time to draw attention to relatives who had been arrested and then disappeared. Since a large-scale attack on the Saturday Mothers ordered by the Ministry of Interior in the summer five years ago, Galatasaray Square has been a no-go zone for the Saturday Mothers. But this is contrary to the right to freedom of assembly and demonstration, the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled on 22 February 2023, rejecting the ministry's objection that the Saturday Mothers threatened the "protection of public order". "Everyone has the right to take part in unarmed and peaceful assemblies and demonstrations without prior permission," says Article 34 of the Turkish Consti-

tution, which the security authorities violated by banning the Saturday Mothers' forcefully dispersed action in August 2018 and all subsequent ones. The blockade of the square is therefore invalid, said the court ruling. The Turkish Interior Ministry and the Istanbul police ignore the ruling and continue to violently crack down on the Saturday Mothers for the third week in a row.

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## Women in the crosshairs of the AKP violence

ANF | 23 APRIL 2023

Under the AKP government, violence against women has reached an extreme dimension. Male-state violence has not only increased, but is also carried out in a very brutal and torturous manner. Women who are targeted by the AKP government are subjected to systematic violence. While perpetrators are protected in trials with the arguments of "good behaviour" and "unjustified provocation", women's facilities and shelters have been closed. Women who resist are attacked and arrested. The Erdogan regime is responsible for thousands of feminicides due to its policies based on male domination.

Against these impositions, the Kurdish women's liberation struggle offers a perspective based on overcoming the patriarchal social system, developing a free women's identity in all areas of life and offering an alternative life for women in the face of the nation state and capitalist modernity. The transformative power of Kurdish women within the women's movements in Turkey and the world has become the compass of the women's revolution in the Middle East and thus the primary target of the AKP regime.

We document some of the murders of Kurdish women during the AKP government:

### **Sakine, Fidan and Leyla**

Sakine Cansız, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Şaylemez, pioneers of the Kurdish women's struggle, were murdered by the Turkish state in the French capital Paris on 9 January 2013. The contract killer died in custody, and the principals have not been charged or convicted to date.

### **Ekin Wan**

During the curfews imposed by the Turkish state in many cities in Kurdistan in 2015, the tortured body of guerrilla fighter Ekin Wan was displayed naked in Varto district of Muş.

### **Dilek Doğan**

On 18 October 2015, a special police unit stormed Dilek Doğan's flat in Istanbul and murdered her. The murderer was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison for deliberate negligence. The sentence was later reduced to six years and three months, with a deduction for good behaviour.

## Mother Taybet

On 19 December 2015, Taybet Inan was shot dead by snipers during curfew in the Silopi district of Şirnak. Her body lay in the street for seven days because the police prevented all attempts to recover it with firearms. The funeral could only take place weeks later, without her family being allowed to attend.

## Sêvê, Fatma, Pakize

On 4 January 2016, in the course of curfews in Northern Kurdish cities, three women were targeted and shot in Silopi: Sêvê Demir was a board member of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), Fatma Uyar, co-chair of the Silopi People's Council and Pakize Nayır an activist of the women's movement KJA.

## Hevrîn Xelef

Hevrîn Xelef, Secretary General of the Syrian Future Party, was tortured and murdered by the Islamist terrorist group Ahrar al-Sharqiya on the road to Ain Issa during the Turkish invasion of Girê Spî (Tal Anyad) and Serêkaniyê (Ras al-Ain) in northern Syria on 9 October 2019. The grouping is part of the "Syrian National Army" (SNA) - a coalition of armed militias created and equipped at the initiative of Turkey as the successor to the "Free Syrian Army" (FSA).

## Gülistan Doku

Gülistan Doku, a student at Munzur University in Dersim, disappeared on 5 January 2020. One day earlier, her ex-boyfriend, Zainal Abakarov, had tried to force the 21-year-old student, who was born in Amed (tr. Diyarbakır), into his car. Doku resisted and passers-by who had observed what was happening informed the police. The police quickly ruled out the man, whose stepfather is an ex-police officer, as a suspect. The case remains unsolved.

## Ipek Er

Ipek Er, an 18-year-old woman from Batman, was driven to suicide on 16 July 2020 after she was raped by non-commissioned officer Musa Orhan. Ipek was hospitalised for more than a month and died on 18 August 2020. The judiciary briefly had the perpetrator arrested, but he was quickly released because he was not a flight risk. Orhan is still at large today. Because of involvement in protests against the release of the rapist, 19 women were investigated on the charge of "membership in a terrorist organisation", meaning the PKK, and four women were arrested.

## Deniz Poyraz

Deniz Poyraz was shot dead by the self-confessed fascist Onur Gencer in the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) office in Izmir, which was under round-the-clock police surveillance, on 17 June 2021. The trial of the murderer is ongoing.

## Garibe Gezer

Garibe Gezer was sexually tortured in prison and died under suspicious circumstances in a solitary cell on 9 December 2021. Garibe tried for a long time to make public the sexual torture she was systematically subjected to in detention, but nothing was done. After her death, JinNews released footage of Garibe Gezer's ill-treatment. The footage shows Gezer being pulled by the arms and dragged across the floor by guards.

## Sakine Külter

Sakine Külter, a mother of five, was brutally tortured and murdered in Silopi on 15 May 2022. The perpetrator was Ibrahim Barkin, the chair of an association of supporters of paramilitary special forces.

## Nagihan Akarsel

Nagihan Akarsel, a member of the Jineolojî Research Centre and editor of the journal of the same name, was shot dead outside her home in Sulaymaniyah on 4 October 2022.

## Evîn Goyî

On 23 December 2023, KCK Executive Council member Emine Kara (Evîn Goyî) was assassinated in Paris along with musician Mîr Perwer (M. Şirin Aydın) and Kurdish activist Abdurrahman Kızıl in front of the Ahmet Kaya Cultural Centre. Evîn Goyî has made a great contribution to the development of the women's revolution in Rojava and has done a great service to humanity in the fight against ISIS.



## AKP keeps Kurdish women politicians in prison

ANF | 24 APRIL 2023

Under the AKP rule, the rights of women, won through many years of struggle, were usurped one by one. The identities, demands and problems of women were rendered invisible and left unsolved because, in the AKP mentality, "The woman's place is in the house".

The AKP, which excludes women from politics and decision-making mechanisms, aims to isolate women politicians from society through detentions. Although the number of women in parliament is one of the highest in the history of Turkey thanks to the equal representation policy of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), 83% of the MPs are men and 17% women. In local governments, the representation of women is much lower. Thanks to the co-chairmanship system implemented by the HDP in local elections, the representation of women, which was not even 1%, reached 3.5%.



## Many women politicians are in prison

The Green Left Party has the highest number of female candidates in the elections that will be held on 14 May. Many of the HDP women who worked hard and struggled to ensure this high representation and to protect women's rights in the streets and in Parliament are currently in prison. There is great violence and pressure against women's struggle activists, especially against Tevgera Jinên Azad (TJA-Free Women's Movement).

Some of the politicians who are still in prison are as follows:

- \* Ayşe Gökhan (TJA Spokesperson)
- \* Leyla Güven (DTK Co-Chair)
- \* Pero Dündar (Deputy)
- \* Gülran Kışanak (Amed Metropolitan Municipality Co-Mayor)
- \* Figen Yüksekdağ (HDP Co-Chair)
- \* Sabahat Tuncel (DBP Co-Chair)

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# Human Rights Violations

## Cizre Municipality co-mayor taken into custody

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 19 APRIL 2023

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Cizre Municipality co-mayor Berivan Kutlu, was taken into custody together with a man called Agit Malgaz. Mayor Kutlu was replaced by a state-appointed trustee. The mayor was detained by the police in front of her house.

Kutlu and Malgaz were taken to the Cizre District Police Department. The reason for their detention could not be learned.

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## Journalist Serdar Akinan taken into custody

ANF | 19 APRIL 2023

The AKP/MHP regime in Turkey is cracking down on any form of criticism. On Wednesday morning, journalist Serdar Akinan was taken into custody at his home in Ayyacık in the western province of Çanakkale. He announced his detention via Twitter.

Apparently, Akinan's arrest is linked to revelations by Muhammed Yakut, a businessman involved in deep state activities. Yakut is said to be close to former Erdoğan-affiliated mafia boss Sedat Peker and stated in a video in recent days that the coup attempt on 15 July 2016 was pure theatre. He also announced that he would soon present evidence and disclosures about members of the government.

The allegedly faked pseudo-coup was described by head of state Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the time as a "gift from God". He took this as an opportunity to massively expand his power apparatus.

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## German police storm Kurdish associations in Darmstadt

ANF | DARMSTADT | 19 APRIL 2023

On Wednesday morning, the German police stormed and searched the premises of the Kurdish Democratic Community Centre in Darmstadt and the office of the KAWA Federation. The reason was a memorial event in June 2020 for Ismail Nazlıkul (Kasım Engin), at which a "CDK flag" (Coordination of Kurdish Democratic Society in Europe) was displayed, as the court order states. Nazlıkul, who belonged to the Central Committee of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), had been killed in a Turkish air strike in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) just a few days before the funeral service.

Parallel to the searches, two preliminary proceedings under sections 129 a/b were initiated against the former chairpersons of the Federation of Democratic Associations of Kurdistan, which is the full name of the association. They are claimed to be responsible for the commemorative event on the occasion of Nazlıkul's death and to have "supported the PKK on several occasions".

The Federation condemned the actions of the authorities and spoke of criminalisation of Kurdish structures in Hesse. "The fact that the public prosecutor's office is searching our premises on the basis of flimsy circumstantial evidence and criminalising political activists is highly problematic, especially now - in times of the earthquake and the upcoming elections. It is generally the wrong sign to incriminate democratic community centres of the Kurds in Germany," said a spokesperson.

The KAWA spokesperson said that Darmstadt was currently discussing a reaction in the form of a rally or press conference with representatives of the associations that have been searched.



## Court in Cyprus approves German request for extradition of Kurdish politician

ANF | LARNACA | 19 APRIL 2023

The Kurdish politician Kenan Ayaz is to be extradited from Cyprus to Germany. A local court in the south of the island approved the German extradition request for the 49-year-old on Wednesday. He will be handed over to the German judiciary, ruled Michalis Papathanasiou, judge at the Larnaca District Court. Contrary to the assumption of Ayaz's lawyers, the court did not assume that he could be deported from Germany to Turkey.

Kenan Ayaz is a long-time activist of the Kurdish movement and was imprisoned in Turkey for twelve years because of his political identity. He has been living in the Greek part of Cyprus since 2013 and is a recognised refugee. On 15 March, he was arrested at Larnaca airport when he wanted to travel to Sweden for a family visit.

Ayaz was arrested on the basis of a German arrest warrant on charges of "membership in a foreign terrorist organisation" - meaning the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). At today's hearing, his defence lawyer complained that this might have been a commitment to the rights of the oppressed Kurdish people and cited several reasons why extradition would be inadmissible under Cypriot law and thus unlawful. The lawyer said it was also absurd that Ayaz was being held in extradition custody for something for which he had been granted political asylum in Cyprus.

Ayaz himself spoke of "indestructible relations" between Germany and the fascist Turkish state and rejected the accusation of terrorism by the German judiciary. "Playing the terror card is part of the strategy to discredit the resistance against the oppression and discrimination of Kurds," Ayaz said. His defence lawyer has announced that he will appeal against the extradition permit to a higher court. The Cypriot criminal court must then decide on the facts of the case within ten days.



## Court in Germany stops deportation of Kurdish activist to Turkey

ANF | 19 APRIL 2023

The threatened deportation of refugee Zana Sili has been stopped for the time being. An urgent application by his lawyer for a review of his case by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) was

successful, according to the Kurdish activist's support group. The court order states that until a decision is made on the man's application for asylum, the competent authority should refrain from "measures to terminate his stay".

The case of Zana Sili caused a stir in the Kurdish community. On Wednesday morning, the police arrested the Kurd, who is politically persecuted in Turkey, in Kassel and took him directly to Frankfurt airport. Apparently, the reason for the deportation was that he had not kept appointments with the foreign office in Augsburg. However, Sili had moved to Kassel with the permission of the Augsburg office in order to pursue a full-time job as a cook. However, the letters from Augsburg did not reach him there.

The planned deportation was only stopped at Frankfurt Airport and Sili was released from custody. In addition to numerous supporters, the Left Party also spoke out against Sili's deportation. Torsten Felstehausen, parliamentary director and spokesperson on domestic policy for the Left Party in the Hessian state parliament, called on the government to take immediate action: "It is scandalous to make an official failure the basis for a deportation. The deportation must be urgently suspended until the urgent application is processed and Zana Sili released from custody."

Felstehausen remarked that the goal must be to prevent Sili's deportation to Turkey, where he would face political persecution. According to human rights organisations, mistreatment and torture in Turkish police stations and prisons are still unfortunately not exceptions, he stated.



## Protests after raids of Kawa Federation and Democratic Society Center in Darmstadt

ANF | DARMSTADT | 21 APRIL 2023

On the morning of 19 April, the police stormed the premises of the "Democratic Society Center of Kurds in Darmstadt e.V." and the office of the "Federation of Democratic Associations - KAWA e.V." also in Darmstadt, as well as several flats of activists in Hesse. The police broke down doors and vandalized the premises. Flags and pictures were torn down. The alleged display of a "forbidden" flag at a commemoration event in June 2020 was given as a pretext for the repressive measure.

Kurds immediately organized protests against this massive attack on their associations. A rally took place in Darmstadt and Mehmet Çoban, co-chair of the KAWA Federation, spoke about what happened.

Çoban said the police called him at 6:22 am and asked him to go to the Democratic Society Center in Darmstadt, saying they had already broken into the premises. The searches lasted until 11 am, Çoban said, adding: "The German state has been criminalizing us Kurds for 30 years, and we Kurds continue to resist. The homes of Songül Çelik and Mehmet Emin Deniz, the former co-chairs of our association, were also searched. In addition, friend Halis, the co-chair of the People's Council of Frankfurt, had his house searched."

## Repression attack in the run-up to the elections in Turkey

Noting that the timing of the searches was significant, Çoban said: “The German state is checking up on us very closely. They know where we are going and what we are doing and that we are operating legally. In our association there were brochures about the earthquake in Pazarcik. Because of the forthcoming elections, there were also HDP flags and brochures there. It is extremely significant that these raids took place in the immediate run-up to Turkey's elections.”

However, the criminalization policy will not lead to any result, emphasized Çoban and demanded respect for the democratic rights of the people of Kurdistan.

Then the former co-chair of the social centre, Songül Çelik, who was herself affected by the raids, took the floor and recalled the severe repression she had experienced at the hands of the Turkish state, which did not end when she came to Germany. Songül Çelik emphasized that the KAWA Federation is a legal and legitimate structure: “In KAWA, we live our culture together and continue our struggle for dignity. Every bird is said to fly to its flock. The bird that separates from its flock perishes. It is the same for Kurdish society. If we don't keep together, we will die. Because we live in a different culture, a different society, we try to keep our culture, our values and our struggle for democracy in our own society. It is clear why the state searched our homes.”

## Die Linke: "End the criminalization of Kurdish associations"

Die Linke politician Uli Franke also spoke at the rally. In a press statement, the party's parliamentary group expressed solidarity with the Kurdish structures affected by criminalization. Jan Schalauske, chair of the parliamentary group Die Linke. in the Hessian state parliament, said: "It is frightening that German authorities think they have to support a policy of persecuting and suppressing opposition figures, which is what the Turkish despot Recep Tayyip Erdogan does. The fact is that under the Erdogan regime, constitutional standards and human rights have been trampled underfoot for years. For Die Linke, one thing is certain: the criminalization of Kurdish associations in Germany must end. The fact that, among other things, the symbols of the Syrian-Kurdish YPG and YPJ, whose fight against the Islamic State was recognized around the world, were banned in this country, is just bizarre. Ironically, this showing of appropriate symbols or involvement in the opposition party HDP is given as the reason for the searches.”

## "Organizations searched with no evidence"

Die Linke shares the assessment of the Kurdish associations concerned that the premises were only searched on the basis of flimsy or no evidence. The politician said: “It is bitter that such a wave of repression against Kurdish associations is possible in Hesse. An electoral campaign gift to Erdogan is the last thing we should want.”

## People visit graves of martyrs on the first day of Eid

ANF | 21 APRIL 2023

In the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria, thousands of people set out early in the morning after the holiday prayers at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan to visit the graves of their relatives in the many cemeteries of martyrs. Flowers are laid at the gravesites in memory of the martyrs and torches and candles are lit. According to the tradition on Eid al-Fitr, sweets are distributed and people wish each other a peaceful holiday.

Visiting cemeteries and graves of the martyrs on holidays is a tradition throughout Kurdistan. In north-eastern Syria, more than 12,000 people have died in the fight against Islamist groups such as ISIS and al-Nusra, as well as against the Turkish occupation. There is hardly a family that does not have a martyr among its relatives.



## No shopping for Eid due to the economic crisis

ANF | VAN | 21 APRIL 2023

There is an economic crisis in Turkey and poverty and unemployment are particularly widespread in the province of Van. Yesterday marked the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and, as every year, the markets were full of people wanting to shop for Eid today. However, many of them go home empty-handed because the prices for food are simply too high. ANF talked to traders and buyers at the market. Some of them said that head of state Erdogan is the reason for the economic crisis. They stated that the elections in Turkey on 14 May are an opportunity to get rid of him and his AKP party.

Trader Mehmet Ali Aslan from Van believes that people cannot shop for Eid because of the AKP's war policy. There is a border crossing with Iran in the district of Özalp, but the people of Van are forbidden to trade at the border, said Aslan: "We are told that the customs border has been opened for us. When we go there, we can only buy three packets of cigarettes, one packet of tea and one kilo of dates. The Iranians, on the other hand, shop in Van and take things in trucks. Erdogan and the AKP have opened the customs border only for people from Iran, but not for us. What we buy there is then taken away from us. I pay 150 liras for the journey, and 150 liras in fees. That alone costs me 300 liras, and I don't get that back by selling the imported goods. Why do Iranians have more rights than we do? Today is a holiday and there are people everywhere, but nobody buys anything. The economy keeps going down the drain, so it doesn't help if someone buys a kilo of onions or potatoes."

Mahmut Kurt, who went to the market to shop, said that disaster will strike if the current government is not voted out: "It's a holiday and we can't buy anything at all. We used to buy all kinds of things for the holidays. We could give our children a treat. Now I don't even want to go home because I can't bring anything. We can no longer provide properly for our children, and we are really in a bad situation. In the up-

coming elections, we can stop this. If he is elected one more time, it will mean disaster. Everything is expensive, people can't buy anything. The crisis is happening in all sectors. If it goes on like this, the poor will die of hunger. This must finally be stopped. Something must be done. We have to wake up, enough is enough."

The greengrocer Nurettin Taş agrees with him and points to a bunch of onions: "This bunch of onions costs six liras to buy. If I don't sell it for seven and a half liras, I don't make a profit. But it is too expensive for people. They don't buy anything because the price is too high for them. Life has become very difficult."



## Protest in Cyprus against threatened extradition of Kurdish politician to Germany

ANF | NICOSIA | 21 APRIL 2023

Protests against the threatened extradition of Kurdish activist Kenan Ayaz from Cyprus to Germany continue. Activists gathered in front of the Supreme Court in Nicosia to protest against the extradition decision. The court will decide on Ayaz's extradition after the lawyers' appeal against the decision of a Cypriot District Court.

The participants of the protest unfurled banners reading "Freedom for Kenan Ayaz" and "Cyprus - Stop the extradition! The people repeatedly chanted "Bijî Kurdistan" (Long Live Kurdistan) and demanded the immediate release of Ayaz as they staged a sit-in.

Lezgin Serhat said that the decision to extradite Ayaz was purely political: "It is not Germany that is behind this extradition request, but the fascist Turkish state. It shows again the same attitude that led to the abduction and extradition of Abdullah Öcalan. This decision by Cyprus will cause deep divisions. It must be reversed immediately, and our friend must be released. We will continue our sit-in strike until Kenan Ayaz is released."

### "We denounce ourselves"

Serhat continued: "We tell the court that decided to extradite Kenan Ayaz to Germany at the request of the fascist Turkish state once again that our friend Kenan is not a terrorist. He has done nothing but defend a just struggle, a just cause. His struggle is also our struggle. If our friend commits a crime, we declare in a loud voice that we are his accomplices in that crime. From here, we declare that we denounce ourselves to the court that made this decision. As Kurds in Cyprus, we will sign this self-report with our friends and submit it to the court."

## Broad protests against extradition decision

Parliamentarians, civil society organisations, youth organisations, anarchist groups, the left-wing AKEL party and the Green Party as well as many other institutions and personalities are protesting against the extradition decision against Kenan Ayaz with press statements and posts on social media.

On the website of Sigma, the leading Cypriot newspaper, an article appeared with the headline "Today's shame will weigh on us for years to come". The article recalls the Greek involvement in the abduction of the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan and says: "If the decision of the Larnaca District Court to extradite Kurdish politician Kenan Ayaz is actually enforced, Cyprus will share responsibility for the suffering of an intellectual and Kurdish politician in German and Turkish prisons."

Alekos Michailidis, who has a large readership on the news website Philieneews, has also been reporting on the trial almost daily in his column since the arrest of Kenan Ayaz. Before the court verdict, Michailidis wrote articles such as "Those who resist always have the last word", "Let him go or arrest us all", "What is happening between the PKK and Turkey is an armed conflict, not a terrorist case", "When will we remove the PKK from the list of terrorist organisations?", "A Kurdish intellectual in Cypriot prisons". After the District Court's verdict, he wrote articles titled "Cypriot justice collaborates with Turkish-German man-eaters" and "How can such humiliation be legitimised?". The Kurdish Solidarity Committee of Cyprus calls on all Cypriots to participate in the demonstration "Freedom for Kenan Ayaz".

## Background

A local court in the south of Cyprus granted the German extradition request for Kenan Ayaz on Wednesday. The 49-year-old will be handed over to the German judiciary, ruled Michalis Papatthanasiou, judge at the Larnaca District Court.

Kenan Ayaz is a long-time activist of the Kurdish movement and was imprisoned in Turkey for twelve years because of his political identity. He has been living in the Greek part of Cyprus since 2013 and is a recognised refugee. On 15 March, he was arrested at Larnaca airport when he wanted to travel to Sweden for a family visit.

Ayaz was arrested on the basis of a German arrest warrant on charges of "membership in a foreign terrorist organisation" - meaning the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). His defence lawyer complained at the trial that this might have been a commitment to the rights of the oppressed Kurdish people, and cited several reasons why extradition was inadmissible under Cypriot law and thus unlawful. He said it was also absurd that Ayaz was being held in extradition custody for something for which he had been granted political asylum in Cyprus.

Ayaz himself spoke of "indestructible relations" between Germany and the fascist Turkish state and rejected the German judiciary's accusation of terrorism. "Playing the terror card is part of the strategy to discredit the resistance against the oppression and discrimination of Kurds," Ayaz said.



## Today is Kurdish Journalism Day

ANF | 22 APRIL 2023

While the Kurdistan press started its journey on 22 April 1898, the Free Press Tradition, which is perhaps its most important offspring, started its journey on 22 April 1990.

Mîqdad Mîdhed Bedirxan started the publication of Kurdistan Newspaper, the first Kurdish newspaper in Cairo, on 22 April 1898. Due to the oppressive and censorship practices of the Ottoman administration, the Kurdistan Newspaper, which was forced to be published in Geneva, Cairo and London, continues to be the source of inspiration for the Kurdish press today.”

Kurdish journalism began 121 years ago, while in exile in Cairo, and since then, has been faced with repression and pressure by successive regimes. The ‘90s were dark years in Kurdish society and Kurdish journalism became the voice of the painful truth and of what was going on in Turkey and Kurdistan. Many Kurdish journalists paid the price of telling the truth and exposing those crimes. They were murdered, jailed, harassed, wounded. We respectfully commemorate all press martyrs who have never ceased to be the voice of truth, despite their fundamental right, the right to life, being constantly violated.

From 1898 to the 1990s, from the 1990s to the present day, the repression and violence against the Kurdish press have been constant, and today is not different: journalists are arrested and imprisoned. After the 15 July [2015] coup attempt, the government is using the State of Emergency to arbitrarily prevent journalists from doing their job. They closed newspapers, magazines, news agencies, television channels and printing houses which are broadcasting in Kurdish and many journalists have been put in prison.

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## Istanbul governor bans Armenian Genocide commemoration event on April 24

ANF | 22 APRIL 2023

The Istanbul Governor's Office has banned the commemoration event of the Armenian Genocide planned to take place in the Kadıköy district.

The April 24 Commemoration Platform stated that the reason for the ban was that it was “deemed inappropriate to hold the event.”

Last year's commemoration was also banned by the governor, and in the two previous years, the event was held online due to the pandemic.

The genocide is remembered every year on April 24, which marks the arrest of more than 200 intellectuals in Istanbul in 1915, widely considered as the start of the genocide.

The April 24 Commemoration Platform, which has organized remembrance events since 2010, criticized the governor's ban, stating that the commemoration events have always been held without any issues despite being targeted by various powers since 2010, according to Bianet.

"There is no reasonable reason for our commemoration event to be banned this year, as it was last year. In a climate where racist meetings and demonstrations are freely organized, where those who continue to demonize the descendants of the Armenians and Assyrians who were killed in 1915 and continue to alienate minority communities with racist hate speech are walking around freely, the ban on this event, which we respectfully and calmly remember those we lost in 1915, is unacceptable.

Confronting 1915 is a necessary step to build democracy, equality, and peaceful coexistence on solid foundations today. Without this confrontation, no democratic move can be permanent, and no social relationship can be egalitarian.

The Governor's Office has clearly shown that it is against the dynamics of democratization by banning our commemoration event. We call on the Governor's Office to abandon this decision."



## Justice Vigil of Şenyaşar family on day 761

ANF | URFA | 22 APRIL 2023

On 14 June 2018, the bodyguards and relatives of AKP Urfa MP Ibrahim Halil Yıldız attacked the Şenyaşar family's shop in Suruç district 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 his sons. He was brutally murdered, being lynched in front of his wife Emine Şenyaşar.

Emine Şenyaşar and her son Ferit (who was also 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.

On day 761 of the vigil, the family shared their photo with Fadil Şenyaşar, who survived the attack with injuries and has been in prison since.

"Hearts unite while walking on the same path. We must take a path to walk together on. And let that path be that of justice. Our struggle continues on day 761."



## Three people injured in attack on passenger bus from Batman in Alanya

ANF | BATMAN | 23 APRIL 2023

The bus belonging to the company Özlem Batman, which was traveling from Alanya, in the province of Antalya, to Batman, was stopped by a group on the highway and attacked.

According to the information received, after a discussion with the business owners at a facility on the road, the bus was stopped. In the attack, the bus driver, the assistant and a passenger were beaten and injured. The injured were taken to the hospital, while the attackers fled from the scene in the vehicles they came from.

The videos taken by the passengers with their phones show the bus driver and his assistant being wounded. The bus arrived in Batman after the first care received by the injured at the hospital.



## Demo in Nicosia demands "Freedom for Kenan Ayaz"

ANF | NICOSIA | 23 APRIL 2023

In Nicosia, Cyprus, numerous people protested against the threatened extradition of Kurdish activist Kenan Ayaz to Germany. Ayaz was arrested on 15 March at the airport in the port city of Larnaca, Cyprus, on the basis of a German extradition request for alleged PKK membership, as he was about to fly to Sweden to visit his family. Since then, the 49-year-old has been in custody. A Cypriot court granted the extradition request on 19 April. Ayaz has appealed against this decision and the proceedings are ongoing.

The arrest of Ayaz has triggered widespread protest in Cyprus. The Kurdistan Solidarity Committee organized a rally in Nicosia on Saturday. The participants carried banners and signs reading "Freedom for Kenan Ayaz" and photos of the Kurdish activist, who has been living in the Greek part of Cyprus since 2013 and is a recognised refugee from Turkey. There were also photos of Teofilos Georgiadis. The former chair of the Kurdistan Solidarity Committee was shot dead by a Turkish contract killer in front of his flat on 20 March 1994.

In addition to Kurds, numerous Cypriot politicians from various parties and activists took part in the rally. In one of the speeches, it was emphasised that Ayaz's political commitment cannot be considered terrorism. "We strongly oppose the extradition of a Kurdish politician who has dedicated his entire life to the

freedom of the people. The people of Cyprus stand with Kenan Ayaz. His struggle is our struggle too," said a statement.

Kenan Ayaz is a long-time activist of the Kurdish movement and was imprisoned in Turkey for twelve years because of his political identity. After his release, he continued his activism and made frequent public appearances. In 2015, Ayaz was an invited speaker at the conference "Challenging Capitalist Modernity" in Hamburg.



## 24 April marks 108th anniversary of Armenian Genocide

ANF | LONDON | 24 APRIL 2023

Peace in Kurdistan remembers all the victims of the Armenian Genocide, one of the most appalling crimes and human tragedies of the modern age, "an unimaginable horror which was to be exceeded only by the Holocaust against the Jewish people. Sadly, the immense scale of this crime against the Armenian people is still to this day not fully acknowledged or understood."

Peace in Kurdistan said in a statement that "it is of course impossible ever to fully recompense the victims for their losses. The least we can do is remember them and honour their memory.

It is, however, still necessary to define and describe what exactly the Armenian Genocide was and how it transpired, for it was no accident nor was it an unforeseen consequence of a mistaken policy during time of war. It was in fact a deliberate, calculated and intended action that was planned and coordinated at the highest level of state policy whose aim was nothing less than the systematic elimination of an entire people, the ethnic Armenians.

The action led to the deaths of an estimated one and a half million Armenians who were forcibly expelled from their historic homelands through massacres and an enforced death march into the Syrian desert. It was a deliberate mass murder whose scale and horrors are still difficult to comprehend or imagine."

The statement added: "Despite the immense sufferings of the Armenian nation, Turkey's forebears did not succeed in eliminating the Armenian people. We can derive hope from this. Likewise, the Turkish regime of today will never succeed in eliminating the Kurds, despite all its efforts to do so.

The Armenian Genocide can never be forgotten. Words are ultimately insufficient to fully convey the true significance of this darkest episode in the history of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War in its final years before its dissolution."

Peace in Kurdistan said: "Unlike President Erdogan and those to whom his aggressive sectarian rhetoric still has some appeal, the consciousness of the Kurds has undergone a total transformation in recent decades under the influence and leadership of Abdullah Ocalan and the Kurdish national political movement that he founded. The vision of the Kurds is now for reconciliation and peaceful existence between

peoples sharing the resources that are abundantly available and building a better social existence for everyone. That points to the way forward for humanity.

We recall the horrors of the past to learn lessons that motivate us to renew the urgent political struggles that are required to put an end to the possibility of ever repeating past errors. In relation to current day Turkish politics, the Ottomans ultimately failed in their policy of denial and extermination of the Armenians. In the same way, Erdogan's efforts to deny and exterminate the Kurds will also ultimately fail."

The Armenian Genocide, said Peace in Kurdistan Campaign, "is the most graphic illustration of the crimes committed under the rule of the Ottomans and modern Turkish nationalism. There is an alarming continuity of the actions waged against the Armenians more than a century ago and the war on all fronts that the Turkish state is waging against the Kurds today. The pains inflicted on the Armenians in the past and on the Kurds today are a consequence of similar aggression and bellicosity.

Modern Turkey is repeating the crimes of the past and Erdogan is surely leading the country to a calamitous defeat by wasting huge resources on waging his war against the Kurdish people. But after the darkness, the light will follow. Erdogan cannot succeed in permanently dividing the people along ethnic lines in an attempt to awaken atavistic hatred in his cynical attempt to maintain his grip on the reins of power. That grip is weakening."

The statement continued: "Glimmers of hope for change are rooted in the people and their growing awareness that the days are numbered for Erdogan and the AKP whose regime more and more resembles a tyranny. Popular resistance may well remove Erdogan once and for all in the upcoming elections. This will be a political earthquake equal to the physical earthquake that shook much of Turkey to its foundations in February.

A sense of hope and desire for real change will eventually see the final dislodgement of the current political leaders from office and mark the start of a new era where peace and reconciliation will have a chance of reshaping Turkey's future.

As we look to the future in the expectation of major change, we send solidarity greetings to the Armenian people who are still implacably fighting for justice and full recognition of the magnitude of the crimes that were committed against their forebears in the early part of the last century."

The statement added: "Scarred by the memories of the horrors inflicted on millions of their ancestors, men and women, the elderly and the newly born alike, during what we now know as the Armenian Genocide, generations of Armenians continue to keep these memories alive.

Hope for a better future reflects the unflagging spirit that resides inside every human being. It is this capacity for hope to endure even in the darkest chapters of our history that is the pre-eminent quality of humanity, and it is that which will see us through the worst of times.

We join with the Armenian people in honouring all the victims of this great crime against all humanity. We share their continuing grief but draw inspiration from their spirit of resistance. It is in that resistance where true hope for the future of humanity lies."



## Kenan Ayaz: My extradition to Germany would be a gift to Erdogan

ANF | 24 APRIL 2023

The long-time Kurdish activist Kenan Ayaz was arrested on 15 March at the airport in the port city of Larnaca in Cyprus on the basis of a German extradition request for alleged PKK membership, as he was about to fly to Sweden to visit family. Since then, the 49-year-old has been in custody. A Cypriot court granted the extradition request on 19 April. While Ayaz appealed against this decision, the proceedings are ongoing. Ayaz has already spent twelve years in prison in Turkey because of his political identity.

The arrest of Kenan Ayaz has led to widespread protests among the Cypriot public. The case is also being reported in the media. The newspaper Simerini published a report in which Ayaz answered questions while in extradition custody in Nicosia. In the article, Kenan Ayaz emphasized the "common destiny" of the people of Cyprus and Kurdistan, establishing a connection between his extradition and the upcoming elections in Turkey.

"Great efforts are taking place for dictator Erdogan to win the elections via my extradition from here via Germany to the fascist Turkish state. If the Cyprus High Court were to agree to this decision, it would be a gift to the fascist Erdogan," Ayaz said.

Remarking that there is not a single piece of evidence that he has committed any criminal offences anywhere, Ayaz said that the arrest warrant issued by Germany is clearly related to Turkey: "I am fighting for the freedom of the Kurdish people and the peoples of Cyprus and the Middle East. All my activities are legal and take place in public. I participate in conferences, seminars, events and TV programmes and do not engage in conspiratorial activities. There is no act of violence that could be construed as a terrorist action. All my work is done within the framework of European legislation."

Ayaz pointed out that: "The accusations made against me in Germany do not contain any allegations of violence either. There are only allegations of assemblies, propaganda and the like. None of this can be classified as an act of terrorism. In Turkey, I was tried in the KCK case and faced the same accusations. My participation in meetings and conferences is interpreted as a criminal offence and the price is years in prison."

"Turkey is demanding that Europe extradite me on the basis of my indictment in the KCK trial. Germany is supposed to put this demand into practice because the Turkish state cannot legally demand this from Cyprus. Germany demands me from Cyprus and will extradite me to Turkey. In this way, the authored scenario will end, and the game will be completed," Ayaz concluded.



# General Elections in Turkey

## Öztürk: We will break the isolation in Imrali

ANF | AMED | 19 APRIL 2023

The Green Left Future Party (Green Left Party) continues its election work with public meetings in various cities. On Tuesday, a meeting was held in Amed, in the borough of Kayapınar (Peyas). Green Left Party co-spokesperson Ibrahim Akın, Democratic Society Congress (DTK) co-chair Berdan Öztürk, Laborers' Movement Party (EHP) chair Hakan Öztürk, Democratic Regions Party (DBP) co-chair Saliha Aydeniz, Amed candidates and many people attended the public meeting.

Başak Demirtaş, wife of former jailed HDP chair, Selahattin Demirtaş, also attended the opening ceremony in Kayapınar and said that HDP supporters are and will continue to be the nightmare of Erdoğan fascism.

EHP chair Hakan Öztürk said: "We know that this government has destroyed freedom of expression. We know very well that women want to get rid of this government that limited their freedom as well as the brotherhood of peoples. The Kurdish and Turkish peoples will not allow this anymore. We are facing a very dangerous government. In order to get rid of this regime, we must gather all our forces in the Green Left Party."

### 'We will break the Imrali isolation'

DTK co-chair Berdan Öztürk said: "They seized our 48 municipalities. They usurped and ignored the will of our people. We will build real peace. We say once again that the end of AKP is near. Isolation is the most important issue. It continues on Mr. Abdullah Öcalan and his friends in Imralı. Isolation is torture, it is unlawful. You cannot solve the Kurdish problem without removing isolation. As long as this isolation continues, no one can talk to us about democracy and a free life. We will break the Imrali isolation."

### 'Amed is resisting'

Green Left Party co-spokesperson Ibrahim Akın pointed out that the people wrote an epic of resistance during the election process, and added: "We are faced with tyranny and dictatorship, but we write epics. Amed is resisting on the streets. We promise to solve the Kurdish issue and ensure peace. The Kurdish people's right to identity will be accepted in the parliament. This is because of our resistance. We will continue to resist. 14 May will mark a new beginning."

## Women in Istanbul: "Let's get rid of the AKP-MHP regime"

ANF | ISTANBUL | 20 APRIL 2023

The Green Left Party Beyoğlu Borough Organization visited the tradesmen in Beyoğlu district and distributed leaflets at the market place in Hacıahmet District.

Istanbul candidate Kamile Kandal drew attention to the economic crisis, violence against women, and the AKP's repression policies, and asked the public to vote for the Green Left Party on 14 May.

Women in the borough stopped Kandal chanting slogans and said: "Let's get rid of the AKP government. Women will win. We want the thieves to leave as soon as possible. Our vote is for the Green Left Party."

The market tradesmen, on the other hand, complained about the increasing prices of vegetables and fruits, and said that the AKP government, which did not produce any solution to the problems experienced, should go. After the leaflet was distributed, the Green Left Party visited the shopkeepers of the district, listened to their problems and exchanged ideas on how to solve the problems. Then, the team visited the election tent in Taksim Square and the election stand in Okmeydanı.

### Esenyurt

The Green Left Party set up a tent in Esenyurt and distributed leaflets as part of its electoral campaign. The police prevented the party members from turning on music and dancing halay. The Green Left Party Istanbul candidates İlknur Birol and Ercan Sağlam visited the shopkeepers in Esenyurt and distributed leaflets.



## Federation of Alevi Associations: We will bring our struggle to Parliament with our candidate

ANF | 20 APRIL 2023

Zeynel Abidin Koç, President of the Federation of Alevi Associations, told ANF that political parties do not open enough space for the representation of various identities. He said: "Different identities can represent themselves in the Green Left Party without melting under one voice."

Koç said that they found the Alevi representation in the Parliament insufficient, that the parties remained weak in the representation of the Alevis at the institutional level, and that the representation was limited to having an "Alevi MP", but that was not enough.



"Although Alevi support is strong among their bases, Alevi institutions have not had identity representation in political parties until today. Take as an example Ali Kenanoğlu. He entered Parliament with the HDP as a representative of an institution. We find direct representation very important. Many associations and Alevis have a federation. Celal Fırat will be our representative, but all our federations must be present in the Parliament for the struggle for the rights of Alevis."

### Full agreement on the name of Celal Fırat

Zeynel Abidin Koç stated that Celal Fırat left the presidency of the Federation of Alevi Associations after he was nominated for the Green Left Party Istanbul 3rd constituency and added that he was unanimously selected as their candidate.

The Green Left Party has the richest base in terms of cultural diversity, said Koç, drawing attention to the importance of different belief groups, cultural and political structures being able to express and represent themselves without melting under the party identity. Koç said: "The Green Left Party is an alliance. It is trying to open up space for Yazidis, Alevis, Assyrians, every belief group and all segments of society. Different identities can represent themselves without melting under one voice. This is very important. The Green Left Party is a movement of different groups. As the Federation of Alevi Associations, we express and represent ourselves in this alliance."



## Şenyaşar Family: We are waiting for the May 14 elections

ANF | URFA | 20 APRIL 2023

The justice vigil of Emine Şenyaşar, who lost her husband and two sons in an armed attack on June 14, 2018 in the Suruç district of Urfa, that involved AKP Deputy İbrahim Halil Yıldız's bodyguards and relatives, and his son Ferit Şenyaşar, who was injured in the same attack, marks its 759th day.

Emine Şenyaşar visited the graves of her children, Adil and Celal Şenyaşar, and her husband, Hacı Esvet Şenyaşar, who are buried in the Suruç Family Cemetery on the eve of Ramadan Feast. The family members said prayers at the graves of their beloved ones.

Ferit Şenyaşar, who wanted to deliver a short speech at the graves of his brothers and father, was blocked by the police. The police turned off the camera of a reporter on the ground. The Şenyaşar family reacted to the police obstruction and made a statement at the entrance of the cemetery.

Ferit Şenyaşar said: "We came to the cemetery today on the eve of the Ramadan Feast. The law enforcement, that ignored the laws and followed the orders of superiors, did not allow my mother to live her sorrow. The government that has long persecuted us is about to go. We are waiting for the election day. On May 14, this mentality that is responsible for injustice and persecution and protects the deputy who killed our family members will go away and the judiciary will become independent and impartial. Those who committed this massacre will be held accountable before an independent judiciary."

After the cemetery visit, the family headed towards the courthouse to hold today's justice vigil.



## HDP: The Kobani trial is a pretext to close the HDP and carry out systematic criminalisation

ANF | ANKARA | 21 APRIL 2023

The HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) Foreign Affairs Co-Spokespersons Feleknas Uca and Hişyar Özsoy released a statement about the Kobani trial, saying the following:

“The Kobani Case was filed in 2020 against 108 people, including the HDP's former co-chairs, Mr Selahattin Demirtaş and Ms Figen Yüksekdağ, current co-chair Ms Pervin Buldan, several current and former HDP deputies and mayors, and all the members of the HDP's Central Executive Board of 2014. This case was launched as a counter move by the Turkish government just two weeks after the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights made its final judgment demanding the immediate release of Selahattin Demirtaş. The indictment in the Kobani Case is based on a Twitter message posted by the HDP on 6 October 2014. This called for democratic protests in solidarity with the people of Kobani, a Kurdish town in Northern Syria that was fighting against the attacks of ISIS, and also against Turkey's embargo on the town. The prosecutor is calling for all the defendants to be given aggravated life sentences (without parole) 38 times for the crimes of “destroying the unity of the state and the integrity of the country” and “premeditated murder” of the people who lost their lives in the Kobani protests. Seventeen politicians are currently being held in pre-trial detention for this case.

The Kobani case is closely linked with the closure case filed against the HDP, for which it serves as a pretext. In the closure case, the prosecution is mainly based on the alleged role and responsibility of the HDP in the murders that occurred during the Kobani protests in 2014. We should stress that the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR has already examined these allegations in the case of Selahattin Demirtaş and concluded that neither Demirtaş nor the HDP had any responsibility for the murders.

In the first hearing of the case, the court board was changed before the hearing started. On the first day of the hearing, the court was filled with law enforcement officers, even in the sections reserved for lawyers. While the trial was pending, the president of the court was dismissed and put under house arrest on the grounds that he was a member of a criminal organization. The court has so far taken multiple decisions that directly violate, or even deny, the right to defense, and therefore the right to a fair trial. These unlawful decisions include the continuation of the hearings in two-week periods without a break, secret witness statements full of contradictions, and the limitation of the duration of the defense to one day for the defendants and their lawyers. The court decided to send the file to the prosecutor for his obiter dictum without even an interrogation of the defendants, including the HDP's former co-chairs Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş.

The 24th hearing of the trial took place at the Ankara 22nd Heavy Penal Court on April 14. At this hearing, before the interrogations of the politicians on trial were completed, the court asked the prosecutor to

submit his final opinion. In response to this situation, the politicians on trial left the courtroom together with their lawyers. The prosecutor read out loud the 5,000-page opinion against the defendants, which took eight hours. In his final opinion, the prosecutor ignored all the evidence that was put in the file in favor of the politicians on trial. The prosecutor deliberately distorted the evidence in the file and openly declared that he had given a political opinion, ignoring all evidence for the defense. The prosecutor has sought aggravated life imprisonment for all politicians on trial, including former co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, over their alleged involvement in the 2014 Kobane protests. He has also demanded that arrest warrants be issued for 12 defendants who are standing trial without arrest and that the jailed politicians be kept imprisoned. The next hearing is scheduled for 3 July 2023 for the defense against the final opinion of the prosecutor by the politicians on trial and their lawyers.”

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## Co-presidency system remains an indispensable principle

ANF | 23 APRIL 2023

On the one hand, attacks on women's rights and lives continue, but on the other hand, their struggle is strengthened by successes. One of these successes is the co-presidency system. In Germany, the Greens introduced the co-presidency system, and in Turkey and Kurdistan, Kurds pioneered this system. The process that began with the participation of women in the activities of political parties led to equal representation in all bodies with the co-presidency system.

### 2005: Aysel Tuğluk becomes first co-chair of a party

After the People's Labour Party (HEP), the active participation of women developed with the People's Democracy Party (HADEP). Women in mixed politics shaped and accelerated the original struggle with ideological development. Significant successes were achieved on the path taken by women's organisations. The Democratic Society Party (DTP) was the first party to introduce the co-chair system in politics. Co-chairs of the DTP, founded in 2005, were Aysel Tuğluk and Ahmet Türk. The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) officially introduced the dual leadership for the first time in Turkey, due to the women's struggle.

### Transferred to local administrations

The co-presidency system was officially recognised in 2013. This paved the way for co-presidency in parties in Turkey. In the local elections on 30 March 2014, the Kurdish movement introduced the zip system and co-presidency in local administrations. Previously, 35 per cent (positive discrimination) and 40 per cent (quota system) had been applied. Since then, there has been a 50 per cent gender quota and equal representation in all bodies.

### First women co-mayors at municipal level

Nine women were elected as mayors in the 2004 municipal elections and 15 women in the 2009 municipal elections. The DTP was the only party in Kurdistan and Turkey with a women's policy that increased the proportion of women mayors. In the 2014 local elections, the BDP contested with the co-presidency

system and the party won 97 municipalities in the elections, showing that the system resonated with society. In October 2014, the Diyarbakır (ku. Amed) Administrative Court ordered the suspension of the co-presidency system, saying it was against the law.

## Defended against all attacks

The ordinances with the force of law issued under the state of emergency declared by the government in 2016 appointed trustees in municipalities and usurped the will of the electorate. In many places, such as Amed Municipality, the co-presidency system was cited as one of the reasons for the appointment of forced trustees. According to a report published by the HDP in 2019, state trustees were appointed in 95 Kurdish cities and towns after September 2016. 93 co-mayors and hundreds of local council members were arrested. The Kurdish women's movement responded by announcing, "Co-presidency is our purple line."

## Co-mayors arrested

In the local elections on 31 March 2019, the HDP won in 65 municipalities, including three major cities and five provinces. In six localities, the elected local government was denied registration, and in 48 localities, trustees were appointed. On 19 August 2019, less than five months after the election, trustees were appointed by the Turkish Ministry of Interior in Amed, where the HDP had won a 62 per cent share of the vote, in Mardin with 56 per cent HDP votes, and in Van with 53 per cent of the vote for the HDP. The co-mayors were removed due to investigations by the public prosecutor's office, and a large number of them were arrested. Since March 2019, 84 HDP co-mayors have been detained. 39 mayors have been arrested, including 21 women. 19 co-mayors have been sentenced to prison, including for alleged membership of an illegal organisation.

## Indispensable principle

The system of co-presidency introduced by Kurdish politics in Turkey has inspired both political parties and civil society organisations. Although the government sees this system as a threat to itself, it has been embraced by society. For the Green Left Party, which is running in place of the HDP in the parliamentary elections on 14 May, co-presidency is also an indispensable principle in all bodies.

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## Green Left Party continues election campaigns abroad

ANF | 24 APRIL 2023

Voting abroad for the 28th term parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential elections in Turkey on May 14 will start on April 27 and will end on May 9. Over 3 million 416 thousand voters living in foreign countries will cast their votes. 227 thousand 646 voters abroad will vote for the first time. The election campaigns of the Foreign Election Coordination, which consists of more than 50 institutions and supports the Green Left Party's election campaign in Europe, continue without interruption.

## Green Left party campaigns in 52 electoral districts

There are 52 electoral districts in Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan and African countries. As part of the Green Left Party election activities, campaign offices and commissions have been established in many countries and electoral districts. As public meetings and visits to houses and shops organized by the election commissions continue at local levels and country-wide, election information brochures are left in the mailboxes of voters. Voters are informed about the upcoming elections at booths opened in all areas on behalf of the Green Left Party.

The institutions that contribute to the Foreign Election Coordination also offer their offices to the Green Left Party for its campaign. All institutions will help transport voters to the ballot boxes.

## 4 thousand observers will monitor the elections

400 Green Left Party representatives, who have the right to appeal to consulates and representative offices, have been assigned by the election coordination to provide election safety. Moreover, seminars continue to train thousands of observers who will monitor the voting process at the polls. According to the information provided by the Foreign Election Coordination, more than 3 thousand observers are already trained, while the applications for becoming an observer are going on.

## Voters will be transported to the polls

The Foreign Election Coordination will take voters, who will vote for the first time and who have to go to different consulates, to the polls by bus and vehicle. Measures are being taken in 52 electoral districts to ensure that voters do not have transportation problems when going to the polls.

## European digital media team

The Green Left Party, which boosts its social media campaigns for overseas elections, is also using the European Digital media team. A team of 53 people is currently contributing to the social media campaigns of the party.

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## HDP commemorates victims of the Armenian Genocide

ANF | ANKARA | 24 APRIL 2023

In a written statement on Monday, HDP's Central Executive Committee commemorated the victims of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 1915.

HDP pointed out that: "Confrontation with historical truths, apologizing to victimized peoples and faiths, promoting restorative justice, understanding each other and healing historical wounds with a sincere approach are indispensable steps for a common future."

The statement continued: "The intent to deny differences, to build a homogeneous society, to promote one race, one religion, one language, and to have peoples and faiths forget their historical legacy has prevailed since the Armenian genocide. The fact that no ethnic identity, language, culture or faith in these lands is superior to another is yet to be recognized socially and politically. Confronting crimes against humanity is an important step towards establishing a common and equal future and social peace. Postponing the confrontation with the disgraces of the past does not serve social peace and speaking the truths.

With these feelings and thoughts, we, the ancient peoples of Anatolia and Mesopotamia, share the 108-year-old pain, the great disaster and this humanitarian tragedy, and once again commemorate the victims of the genocide with sorrow and respect."

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## Interview

### Nicolas Walder: Only hope for regime change is the Kurdish movement

ANF | 21 APRIL 2023

Swiss Greens Deputy Chair and National Parliament Deputy Nicolas Walder answered questions by Serkan Demirel from Medya News TV about the Presidential and General Elections to be held on May 14 in Turkey.

*As you know, presidential and parliamentary elections will be held in Turkey on May 14. Both the opposition in Turkey and many European politicians emphasize the historical significance of these elections. How do you evaluate the upcoming elections?*

Of course, these elections, like all other elections, are extremely important. However, considering a President who monopolized power after 11 years in prime ministry and 9 years in the presidency, these elections have historical significance.

Turkish democracy is turning into autocracy in the hands of a strongman. And this is indeed a danger to the country. For me, if Erdoğan continues to hold power for 5 or more years, this will pose a very serious danger to Turkish democracy.

### 'Erdoğan increases pressure against his rivals'

*How would you explain the importance of these elections, especially when we consider the human rights violations that have taken place during Erdoğan's rule?*

These elections are also important in terms of the human rights violations against all political opponents, especially in the Kurdish regions. Erdoğan resorts to a crackdown on people and political parties that he thinks pose a danger to him. He also replaced some people in the administration and military by his supporters. Erdoğan's rule is posing a serious danger in terms of human rights and freedoms.

Therefore, it is necessary to revive political pluralism and freedom in the political sphere.

### 'Kurdish movement is only hope to change regime'

*As someone who closely follows the Kurdish question, how important do you think these elections are for the Kurds and the solution to the Kurdish question?*

The position of a possible government which will be formed under the leadership of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, concerning the Kurdish question is extremely uncertain. Therefore, we do not know what kind of policies concerning the Kurds will be introduced.

In any case, we can predict that a more open political atmosphere will prevail to allow for more discussion and a more tolerant approach than Erdoğan's rule.

As a matter of fact, there will be things to be done after the elections. If the opposition wins, I think that the Kurdish question should be discussed and, above all, the autonomy rights and freedoms of the different minorities in Turkey should be promoted.

I believe that this is very important. Maybe all of this can be done after the elections. It is also very important that the HDP and the Kurdish movement stated that they would not nominate a presidential candidate to support the opposition coalition in these elections. The only hope for changing the current regime is this attitude of the Kurdish movement.

### 'Kurdish votes will be decisive'

*Turkey's 3rd largest party, the HDP, will enter these elections under the Green Left Party since it is facing a closure case. It is claimed that the Green Left Party will play a key role in these elections. How do you evaluate the importance of the Green Left Party?*

As the 3rd largest party in Turkey that receives over 10 percent votes, the role of the HDP (Green Left Party) is very important in these elections. The opposition coalition cannot win the elections if it does not receive the 10 percent from the Green Left Party. We must regard the HDP as a chance to change the regime. In this sense, the votes of Kurdish voters will be extremely important and decisive.

Furthermore, I think that the HDP's stance in these elections is also a message that the Kurds are ready to work with their partners not only on the Kurdish question, but also on human rights and freedoms in Turkey.

I consider HDP's decision to participate in the elections under the Green Left Party as an effort to maintain itself in the political sphere in Turkey, despite Erdoğan's attempts to ban the party. This is a sign of the political maturity of this party.

### **'Crackdown on HDP and Kurds shows weakness of government'**

*How do you evaluate the Erdoğan regime that keeps criminalizing the HDP and the Kurds?*

There are several reasons why they do so. Two of them can be seen in conservative and populist movements all over the world. Targeting a minority is clearly a policy of creating internal or external enemies and uniting the majority of the people against these imagined enemies. This is an easy policy to maintain your power and hide your weak policies when you don't have much to offer to the public.

Moreover, there is a situation where some sections of the population resort to violence for certain reasons. This causes the majority to unite against the people who resort to violence.

But I think that targeting the HDP is the demonization of a minority by those who do not want to lose power. It is claimed that if political rights are granted to the HDP, the Kurds will want independence, the country will be divided, and Turkey's power will come to an end. There are many myths around these ideas.

We see the same arguments in other countries, for example, in China. There is a minority that is discriminated against, although it does not pose any danger to the unity of the country. The same arguments used in Turkey are used against this minority. The Chinese government, which is afraid of losing its power, is taking advantage of the demonization of a minority. This is unacceptable.

I hope that the next government in Turkey will cooperate with the Kurds and the political parties that represent them to create a more inclusive society.

### **'HDP should be supported by the international community'**

*Why should we support the HDP, which will enter the elections under the name of the Green Left Party?*

First, I am a green and left-wing politician, so I have political reasons to support this party. I think that international support for this party is extremely important. Because, if you advise a minority or the Kurds to use political means rather than the means of violence, you cannot prevent their access to democracy. If you ban a political party, you prevent it from making its democratic voice heard. Therefore, if you advocate peace and democracy like me, I think that you should support the right of all parties and all people to make their voices heard through democratic means.

I believe that it is an extremely dangerous move to ban political parties and their activities, because if this is done, the people will have no choice but to revolt, using violence when necessary.



Allowing people to express themselves and political parties to do their job is indeed extremely important to any decent democracy. Considering all of these, I strongly support the HDP and oppose Erdoğan's desire to restrict democratic freedoms by banning a political party.

### **'Turkey will be a dictatorship if Erdoğan is re-elected'**

*Recently, many politicians have described Erdoğan's regime as a dictatorship. How do you evaluate it?*

I can describe the current system in Turkey not as a dictatorship, but as an autocracy in which all power is amassed in the hands of a single person. In 2017, the presidential system was introduced. With this system change, Erdoğan limited the multi-party system and political pluralism in a sense.

I think that his stay in power for a few more years will turn this man who has been ruling Turkey for 20 years into a dictator. We saw it happen in Russia. We can observe an alarming tendency towards dictatorship in Turkey as well.

The fact that there are still elections in contemporary Turkey is proof that there is no dictatorship in its true sense. However, these elections might indeed be the last free elections in Turkey. Hence, it's very important to replace the current regime with diversity and pluralism.

### **Do you think Erdoğan poses a threat to Europe as well?**

Democracy is a system that offers much more stability and sustainability in relationships. It is also true that seeing a dictator confronting a democratic Europe is a risk. We see this happening in Russia. In this sense, a dictator in Turkey means that Europe is facing a risk that cannot be ignored.

A Turkey ruled by such a strongman is not only a danger to the Turks and, of course, the Kurds, but also to the whole of Europe and the world, including the Middle East. We are talking about Europe, but the stability of the Middle East will at the same time be directly affected by the decisions of a man whose sole purpose is to preserve his political survival and power. And all of these are really a big risk.

When it comes to dictatorship, it is no longer the general interest that matters, but the interest and power of a single man. And this is truly unacceptable.

### **'Governments may tend to hold on to power illegally'**

*Do you think these elections will take place in a democratic and free environment?*

I hope that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) will send hundreds of observers. I hope that these elections will take place in a peaceful, democratic and free environment. I think that one should be very careful because the polls and the current troubles show that there will be different trends in these elections.

There will always be a tendency for those in power to hold power illegally. Therefore, everyone, especially the opposition, should be careful and I hope that the OSCE will do its job properly.



# Opinion

## The only way is the Green Left Party

Selahattin Erdem | 20 April 2023

The upcoming elections will mark the most important turning point in Turkey's history in the last century. The Republic of Turkey, founded following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, is marking its centennial year. There will be an election on 14 May and a new administration will come to rule the country. This new administration will shape Turkey's second century. The historical question that arises then is what will Turkey's second century be like? Or which values and principles will shape it? Will the fascist, colonial, genocidal mentality and politics shape it like the first century? Or will the country see a democratic change and transformation concerning Kurdish and women's freedom? The 14 May elections will answer these questions.

When we look at history, Turkey's first century had its ups and downs. The country went through various periods in terms of different areas of life. Its history was shaped by various political administrations, economic structures, new constitutions, and international relations. Some divided the century into the first and second republics. But despite all these categorizations, the essence of the matter, namely the mentality and policies that steered the republic, did not change. The century-old republic has always pursued an anti-Kurdish, fascist-colonial-genocidal mentality and policy. For this reason, Turkey has never been democratic despite its transition to political pluralism in the 1950's. It has always remained a fascist and military dictatorship. It was mainly ruled by one person and one party.

In the last century, except for some privileged people, the political system subjected the Kurdish, Armenian, Greek and Assyrian peoples to genocide and oppressed women, workers and laborers. It has caused pain and distress for everyone, including those who run the state. This is clearly seen when you look at those who ruled the state from the beginning, including Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü, Menderes and Bayar, Demirel and Ecevit, Özal, Erbakan, Kenan Evren, Çevik Bir, İlker Başbuğ and Yaşar Büyükanıt. This aspect reveals what the republic really is.

In its first century, the republic did not only oppress, exploit and repress the Kurds, the Alevis, women, workers and laborers, and other peoples, but also those who governed suffered pain and torture. So, can such a state and administrative system be defended? Can it be said that the same system should continue as it has been? Can it be said that the same mentality and politics should be maintained as they have been? Clearly, these questions will be answered negatively. However, the AKP-MHP fascist alliance, the "People's Alliance" formed by them, and the other parties such as New Welfare, Hüda-Par, BBB, DSP, which joined this alliance, responded positively and maintained this system in its current form. They envisage that the second century, which they define as the "Turkish Century", will be shaped by hatred towards the Kurds, the Alevis, women and workers. They are in favour of continuing the present catastrophe by deepening it.

There is also the "Nation Alliance", which prepares for the elections under the umbrella of the main opposition party, the CHP. Former CHP member Mustafa Sarıgül supports this alliance. They criticize the so-called 'Presidential System' introduced by the AKP-MHP fascism and they promise a return to the former system, as it was five years ago. In other words, they just want to restore the current system based on the previous system. But will such a restoration change the republic that 'devours its own children'? Can a restoration turn Turkey's second century into a century of democracy and liberties? It is obvious that they cannot do these things and cannot essentially replace the mentality and policies of the last century. So, they too cannot remove the current catastrophe and cannot turn the second century into a century of freedom and democracy.

The third option is the "Labour and Freedom Alliance", which prepares for the elections under the umbrella of the "Green Left Party". This alliance seeks to change the mentality and policies that dominated the first century. In other words, it envisages replacing the hatred towards the Kurds, the Alevis, women and worker-labourers by a free, democratic and brotherly life. It has a concrete program that favours inclusivity. They made this clear in the election manifestos they revealed to the public. In short, if the Labour and Freedom Alliance wins the election and implements its program, it will radically change the current system and make Turkey's second century a century of freedom and democracy.

But how will this happen? Can such a radical change be achieved just by winning an election? Can the 'Labour and Freedom Alliance' win the election? Can the AKP-MHP fascism be overthrown by elections? These questions have no clear and precise answers. In this respect, it is necessary not to overrate the "Labour and Freedom Alliance", not to think that everything can be achieved through elections, and not to regard the alliance of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (the CHP leader) as omnipotent. But Erdoğan and Bahçeli's dictatorship could be overthrown by the elections, and this is very important. Thus, a historical disaster - that is to say the continuation of the AKP-MHP government for another term - will be prevented. Turkey may enter the second century by paving the way for a democratic change.

This means that everything will not be resolved by the 14 May elections. However, the overthrow of the AKP-MHP fascist dictatorship on 14 May may pave the way to solutions. Of course, the continuation of the struggle for freedom and democracy based on proper tactics will do the rest. The democratic revolution would be permanent and continue with the right struggle. This is a task that revolutionary socialists will pursue uninterruptedly.

Therefore, two things are important in the 14 May elections: The first is to overthrow the AKP-MHP fascism, and the second is a strong representation by the Green Left Party, which is the main party of the Labour and Freedom Alliance, in Parliament. The candidates of the Green Left Party are prominent politicians who have the knowledge and experience that will shape the second century with freedom and democracy. Hence, it is the Green Left Party that will shape the new century in the right way. The Green Left Party is a key party for the new Turkey. For this reason, the revolutionary intellectuals who discuss the current circumstances use the slogan "the only way out is the Green Left Party". In order to move forward on the right path, everyone must work for the Green Left Party and contribute to its election victory, because it will pave the way for the revolution. This is the most urgent revolutionary and democratic attitude and duty under the current circumstances.

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