

# THE İMRALI POST

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

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## Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

## Journalist Seyit Evran's message to Abdullah Öcalan

ANF | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

Kurdish journalist Seyit Evran died of a heart attack in Rojava on 22 September. A long-time reporter for ANF and a revolutionary pioneer in the Free Press, he left behind a great legacy to his successors. Evran will be laid to rest at the Şehid Delil Saruxan Cemetery of Martyrs in Qamishlo on Wednesday, 27 September.

Last year, Seyit Evran paid a visit to the house in the village of Elpelur to the west of Kobanê, known as the "Öcalan House", where Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan stayed for three months in 1979 after he had crossed from Bakur (Northern Kurdistan) to Rojava.

During his visit to the house on 17 January 2022, Seyit Evran wrote the following message addressed to Abdullah Öcalan:

"This feeling is just undescrivable.

Had we said 43 years ago that a revolution would take place in Rojava, North-East Syria and the four parts of Kurdistan, nobody would have believed us. We would have been called mad.

This is where this revolution began exactly 43 years ago.

This is one of the houses where Leader Apo (Abdullah Öcalan) lived when he moved to Kobanê. It is exactly this place where steps for a revolution began to be taken.

These feelings are just undescrivable and would only make one happy."

— ★ —

## Lawyers file another application to visit Öcalan

ANF | ISTANBUL | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

Asrın Law Office lawyers Rezan Sarıca, Raziye Öztürk, Faik Özgür Erol and Mazlum Dinç have submitted an application to the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and the İmralı Penitentiary Directorate to meet with their client Abdullah Öcalan, who is held under heavy isolation conditions in İmralı F Type High Security Prison. Lawyers also applied to the prosecutor's office and the prison directorate to meet with other prisoners on İmralı; Ömer Hayri Konar, Hamili Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş.

Asrın Law Office, which represents Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners on the prison island of İmralı, made an application to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) two days ago regarding the developments covering 30 April 2023 and 31 July 2023.

Emphasizing that the “incommunicado” status has deepened, the application underlined that 25 requests for lawyers’ visits and 12 for family visits were made in the 3-month period from 30 April to 31 July 2023, but all of them went unanswered. The lawyers also noted that the fate of the letters sent to İmralı is unknown.

Asrın Law Office said that the CPT should visit İmralı as a matter of “urgency” and listed its demands as follows:

- A Committee’s urgent visit to the İmralı Island Prison [is needed], together with the urgent public disclosure of the CPT’s report and findings regarding its last visit,
- Immediate execution and continuation of lawyer visits, and the elimination of their obstruction by unlawful court decisions,
- Carrying out and ensuring the continuity of family and guardian visits, and ending the prevention of unlawful disciplinary punishments,
- In parallel with the establishment of visiting rights, ensuring that the applicants use their routine telephone rights to call their families and relatives,
- Ensuring that all obstacles to communication with the outside and with lawyers by letter, telegraph and fax are eliminated,
- Ensuring that the actual or illegal practices related to newspapers, magazines and books are ended,
- Taking coercive measures to eliminate torture, inhuman and ill-treatment conditions and incommunicado. The application of the procedures regulated in Article 10/2 of the Convention is requested immediately.

Lawyers are requesting to meet with Kurdish people’s leader Abdullah Öcalan twice a week. However, applications for visits are systematically left unanswered. In some cases, months later, lawyers are informed that disciplinary action has been taken against the Kurdish people’s leader and therefore no visit can be granted.

Concerns over the situation of Öcalan increased after the Executive Council Member of the Kurdistan Democratic Communities Union (KCK), Sabri Ok [said](#) in an interview on the Kurdish TV Channel Sterk TV on July 8 that threatening letters had recently been sent to Abdullah Öcalan anonymously via the İmralı prison administration.

### **Conditions of extraordinary isolation**

The İmralı F Type High Security Closed Prison was built specifically for Abdullah Öcalan in February 1999 and has since been operated based on a special status and through special practices.

Under the so-called aggravated execution regime, Abdullah Öcalan and his fellow prisoners, Hamili Yıldırım, Ömer Hayri Konar and Veysi Aktaş, have been held under conditions of extraordinary isolation for a long time, 24 years in terms of Öcalan and eight years each in terms of other inmates.

Despite all their attempts, lawyers from the Istanbul-based Asrin Law Office, which represents Abdullah Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners, have not been able to receive even a single sign of life from their clients since 25 March 2021. They could not obtain any information regarding their health status, their detention conditions, their legal situation in 2022. It has been 29 months that their clients have not been heard from in any way.

## Öcalan held in a single cell since 1999

According to the “[2022 Annual Assessment Report on Rights Violations and the Current Conditions in İmralı Island Prison](#)” released by Asrin Law Office on 15 February 2023, Abdullah Öcalan has been held in a single cell in İmralı Island Prison since 15 February 1999. For the first ten years, he was the only prisoner in the island prison. In November 2009, new cells were added to the prison and five other prisoners were brought in. Nevertheless, Öcalan continued to be kept in solitary confinement 23 hours a day on weekdays and 24 hours a day on weekends.

Until 2011, Öcalan’s right to see his lawyers was limited to one hour one day a week, but in fact, he was constantly prevented from availing himself of this limited right, with the authorities alleging the pretext of “adverse weather conditions” or a “technical defect” of the coaster going to the island. In the twelve years since 27 July 2011, he has only been able to see his lawyer five times, between May and August 2019. The last of these five meetings took place on 7 August 2019.

Since 2014, Öcalan has received five visits from family members. His brother’s visit to the prison on 3 March 2020 marks Öcalan’s last direct contact with his family. Also, in 24 years, he communicated with the outside world via telephone on only two occasions (on 27 April 2020 and 25 March 2021). During the last phone call on 25 March 2021, the connection was lost after only two minutes and could not be restored. Öcalan has not been heard from since.



## Popular action in Heseke demands freedom for Öcalan

ANF | HESEKE | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

Imprisoned for more than 24 years on the prison island of İmralı, the Kurdish people’s leader, Abdullah Öcalan, has been held incommunicado for 30 months now, without any contact with the outside world. The complete lack of information regarding the situation of Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners – Hamili Yıldırım, Ömer Hayri Konar and Veysi Aktaş – raises growing concerns about their safety and health. Countless requests for visits filed for years by the lawyers and families of İmralı detainees have gone unanswered.

The Popular Initiative in the Cizire Region in North-East Syria has been organizing a series of actions and activities since 9 September to denounce the aggravated isolation of Abdullah Öcalan.

In the scope of the activities, the Popular Initiative started an action in Syriac Square in the Nasra neighborhood of Heseke today.

The action, which is taking place in a tent set up in the square, is attended by local people, representatives of political parties and non-governmental organizations, as well as delegations from the Education Centre, Energy Committee and Economy Committee in North-East Syria.

Speaking here, Democratic Union Party (PYD) General Council member Nalin Eli stated that the people in North-East Syria have made many achievements thanks to the ideas and philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan.

Nalin Eli pointed out that the goal of the ongoing conspiracy against Öcalan was to prevent a revolution, and that Öcalan frustrated the conspiracy and turned the İmralı Prison into an Academy of science and enlightenment.

Nalin Eli called on all those who advocate for revolution and democracy to enhance the struggle until the isolation of Öcalan is broken and his physical freedom ensured. Eli also called on the international community and relevant institutions and organizations to denounce the unlawful treatment of the Kurdish leader. The action will conclude tomorrow evening.



## ÖHD lawyers call on Turkish government to adhere to its own and international laws

ANF | ISTANBUL | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

The legal association ÖHD (Özgürlük İçin Hukukçular Derneği) called for the abolition of the illegal isolation system on the prison island of İmralı at simultaneous press conferences in several cities in Turkey. The Turkish government was asked to abide by its own laws and international conventions.

Representatives of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV), the Human Rights Association İHD and the Asrin Legal Office, which represents Abdullah Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners Ömer Hayri Konar, Hamili Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş, also attended the press conference in the ÖHD building in Istanbul. Lawyer Sezin Uçar said that there had been no contact with the İmralı prisoners for more than thirty months. The last lawyer visit to the prison island was on 7 August 2019, and telephone or written communication has also been denied.

Uçar said: “The lawyers cannot provide legal assistance and they have no information about the health status of their clients as they cannot communicate with their clients in any way, including by telephone or

letter. The prisoners held in İmralı are subjected to inhumane and unacceptable isolation practices due to their Kurdish and political identities, and this unprecedented illegality is not sufficiently addressed in public. This situation is almost ignored.”

The lawyer added: “The Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), a body of the Council of Europe of which Turkey is a member, has previously prepared reports on İmralı Prison and issued recommendations and warnings to Turkey to end these illegal practices. Unfortunately, Turkey is far from complying with these recommendations. It has defiantly deepened the isolation system in İmralı and made İmralı Prison an inaccessible and unreachable place.”

Uçar continued: “The United Nations Human Rights Committee granted a request from the lawyers of Mr. Öcalan and three other prisoners for an interim injunction in September 2022 and decided that the applicants should immediately have the opportunity to consult with the lawyers of their choice without any restriction. However, Turkey did not comply with this decision. In January 2023, after the lawyers informed the Human Rights Committee of the continued lack of news, the Committee again reminded Turkey of the interim injunction, which unfortunately Turkey did not comply with.”

In addition, on 10 June 2022, 775 lawyers belonging to 29 bar associations applied for a certificate of admission to the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, but the application still has not been responded to. On 14 September 2022, 350 lawyers from 22 countries, especially from Europe, applied for permission to visit the prison on İmralı Island. There was no response to these requests.

### **İmralı is a lawless zone**

Uçar said: “This whole picture clearly shows that the law on İmralı has been put on hold in an unacceptable manner. In İmralı, political decisions apply, not laws. Mr Öcalan and the other three prisoners should be lost and forgotten in isolation. However, we know that despite all these unlawful actions, Mr. Öcalan has always acted constructively. From the day he was brought to İmralı, Mr. Öcalan has always acted constructively and sincerely committed himself to a solution to the Kurdish question. The Kurdish question is Turkey's most structural problem. At various times and in various ways, the state has also sat down with him and conducted dialogue to resolve this issue. Mr. Öcalan’s calls led to ceasefire processes and peace groups came to Turkey.

Today, the isolation on İmralı has unfortunately spread to all of Turkey in every respect. ‘Security policy’ has replaced dialogue and peace policy in resolving the Kurdish question, and Turkey has entered a burning and dark period in all areas, especially in the economy. For all these reasons, the situation of isolation should be terminated immediately.

As lawyers fighting for democracy, freedom and justice, we call on Turkey to comply with the requirements of the decisions of the international legal institutions to which it is a party, such as the UN Human Rights Committee and the CPT. We call on all lawyers and the democratic public, especially bar associations and legal organizations, to speak out against this unacceptable isolation policy.”

## Young women march in Kobanê to denounce the international conspiracy against Öcalan

ANF | KOBANE | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Imprisoned for more than 24 years on the prison island of Imrali, the Kurdish people's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, has been held incommunicado for 30 months now, without any contact with the outside world. The complete lack of information regarding the situation of Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners – Hamili Yıldırım, Ömer Hayri Konar and Veysi Aktaş – raises growing concerns about their safety and health. Countless requests for visits filed for years by the lawyers and families of Imrali detainees have gone unanswered.

The Union of Young Women in Kobanê organized a march to denounce the international conspiracy against Abdullah Öcalan that resulted in his handover to Turkey in 1999, since when he has been held captive on the prison island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara in Turkey.

The march was followed by a demonstration where a member of the Union, Ciwan Alîkar Mistefa, read out a press statement which said: “The genocidal powers initiated the greatest savagery against the Kurdish people's leader 25 years ago. The conspiracy was aimed at annihilating the Kurdish people and the freedom movement. Leader Öcalan left Syria on 9 October 1998 due to Turkish state repression and went to Europe to develop a democratic solution to the Kurdish question. Seeking to prevent Leader Öcalan's efforts for the freedom of the Kurdish people and search for peace in the Middle East, the conspiratorial powers did not allow the recognition of Leader Öcalan anywhere.”

Remarking that the conspiracy was developed against the Kurdish people and all libertarian peoples in the person of Abdullah Öcalan, the statement said: “The freedom of the Kurdish people and world women cannot be achieved unless the physical freedom of Leader Abdullah Öcalan is attained.”

The statement added: “Our primary duty is to break the isolation imposed on Abdullah Öcalan and to achieve his physical freedom.”

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## Families apply to visit their relatives on Imrali

ANF | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

There has been no news from Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan for 30 months and there is absolute isolation imposed on him.

Abdullah Öcalan's brother Mehmet Öcalan and his guardian Mazlum Dinç, Ömer Hayri Konar's brother Ali Konar, Hamili Yıldırım's brother Polat Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş's sister Melihe Çetin applied to the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office to visit their relatives.



Families also applied to the Directorate of İmralı F Type High Security Closed Penal Institution through the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

Asrın Law Office, which represents Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners on the prison island of İmralı, has recently submitted an application to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) regarding the developments covering 30 April 2023 and 31 July 2023.

Emphasizing that the "incommunicado" status has deepened, the application underlined that 25 requests for lawyers' visits and 12 for family visits were made in the 3-month period from 30 April to 31 July 2023, but all of them went unanswered. The lawyers also noted that the fate of the letters sent to İmralı is unknown.

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Until 2011, Öcalan’s right to see his lawyers was limited to one hour one day a week, but in fact, he was constantly prevented from availing himself of this limited right, with the authorities alleging the pretext of “adverse weather conditions” or a “technical defect” of the coaster going to the island. In the twelve years since 27 July 2011, he has only been able to see his lawyer five times, between May and August 2019. The last of these five meetings took place on 7 August 2019.

Since 2014, Öcalan has received five visits from family members. His brother’s visit to the prison on 3 March 2020 marks Öcalan’s last direct contact with his family. Also, in 24 years, he communicated with the outside world via telephone on only two occasions (on 27 April 2020 and 25 March 2021). During the last phone call on 25 March 2021, the connection was lost after only two minutes and could not be restored. Öcalan has not been heard from since.

## 15th group takes over vigil against isolation of Öcalan in Maxmur

ANF | MAXMUR | 1 OCTOBER 2023

The 15th group took over the vigil that was launched to protest the isolation of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan on 20 July at Martyr Rustem Cudi Refugee Camp in Maxmur.

Speaking on behalf of the 14th group at the handover ceremony, Rojbîn Otun said: "We are the children of this camp. We are determined to continue our actions until our leader regains his physical freedom. We will give the strongest response to the enemy with our actions."

After the speech, the vigil was handed over to the 15th group.

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## Prisons

### Political prisoner Bayram Aslan released after 30 years

ANF | AMED | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

Political prisoner Bayram Aslan has been released after thirty years in prison in Turkey. The Kurdish man was arrested in Muş province on 24 September 1993 and sentenced to life imprisonment by a State Security Court (DGM) the same year for "destroying Turkey's state unity". He was twenty-one years old at the time.

Since the beginning of his imprisonment, Bayram Aslan has participated in hunger strikes and resistance actions against the repression behind bars. He is one of several thousand political prisoners who, between 2018 and 2019, took part in a hunger strike movement lasting a total of 200 days, organised by the Kurdish politician Leyla Güven for the lifting of Abdullah Öcalan's isolation and the resumption of peace negotiations.

After stays in various prisons in the country, including Amed (tr. Diyarbakır), Muş, Yozgat, Burdur, İzmir, Elbistan and Midyat, Bayram Aslan was most recently held in the high security prison Kalkandere near Rize, a province in north-eastern Turkey on the Black Sea. After his release, he was received by his relatives on Sunday and greeted with trills of joy in his native town of Bismil in Amed.

In recent months, many prisoners have been released who were sentenced to life imprisonment in 1993 before the now abolished state security courts. However, about 200 political prisoners are not released even after serving their regular sentence. No court decides on release, but a committee of the prison at its own discretion. Without the approval of this committee, release from prison can always be postponed for three or six months. One of the common questions the committee asks for its social prognosis is: “In your opinion, is the PKK a terrorist organisation?”



## Kurdish journalist Bayram remains in prison

ANF | URFA | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

Kurdish journalist Hamdullah Bayram must remain in prison. A criminal court in Urfa (Riha) on Monday rejected a request from his defense lawyer Resul Temur to revoke the arrest warrant and release the Yeni Yaşam newspaper employee. The reason given was the risk of escape.

Hamdullah Bayram has been in prison since March on suspicion of membership in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and alleged support for the organization. His defense lawyer said that the allegations against him are related to his work for the free Kurdish press. The trial against Bayram has been brought to a standstill, because this and another case against the Kurds were merged into one case.

Shortly after his arrest, Bayram was included as a further suspect in a case against eleven colleagues, nine of whom were in custody for seven months on “terror” allegations. The second case concerns Bayram’s work for the newspaper “Özgürlükçü Demokrasi”, which was banned by state decree. He is accused of continuing to distribute legally published newspapers and magazines in Turkey.

The basis of the accusations against Bayram in both proceedings are articles dealing with political events in Kurdistan, and the statements of the anonymous witness “K8Ç4B3L1T5”, who stated in an earlier trial that he was a state agent at the Mezopotamya news agency (MA). A significant part of the indictment also consists of statements about the PKK and its umbrella organization KCK (Community of Kurdistan Societies). The public prosecutor’s office asked for a sentence in the upper range and called for a conviction according to Article 314/1 of the Turkish Penal Code. Bayram faces a prison sentence of between seven and a half and fifteen years if he is convicted.

The trial against Bayram is scheduled to continue on 23 October. Due to the scheduling of a nearby date, the court ordered the journalist to be held in the high-security prison in Urfa instead of returning him to the Sincan prison near Ankara, where he has been held since the spring.

### Repression against journalists

State repression, accusations of alleged support for terrorism or insulting the president, hindrances to research and threats on the street: all of this is part of everyday life for free press journalists in Turkey. Anyone reporting from the Kurdish regions of the country is under special observation by the authorities and the judiciary. According to a report by the journalists’ association DFG (Dicle Fırat Gazeteciler Derneği),

there are currently at least 59 journalists (as of 3 September 2023) in Turkish prisons. This means that Turkey remains one of the largest prisons for media professionals in the world.

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## Report exposes systematic rights violations of prisoners in Tarsus jail

ANF | MERSIN | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Reports of rights violations against political prisoners in Turkish prisons are increasing every day. A report from Tarsus T-1 prison in Mersin province underlined several rights violations, among which are increased isolation and attempts to blackmail prisoners by suspending their release. The human rights association IHD and the legal association ÖHD have compiled information from relatives and prisoners about the situation in Tarsus jail.

### Prisoners in isolation

The report said that political prisoners are isolated in their cells and have virtually no contact with other prisoners. They are only taken out of the block once a week to exercise; otherwise there are no social or cultural activities.

### Too little food

The food supply is also inadequate, said the report, adding that the food provided is too little for the number of people in a cell block. In addition, there is a lack of variety and the food does not even contain the minimum amount of vitamins and minerals that are necessary for a normal diet. Cleaning supplies have to be purchased.

### Visiting times for political prisoners shortened

Visiting hours are an important means of repression against prisoners. A closed visit can take place once a week, lasting 45 minutes, while open visits lasting 45 minutes are only allowed once a month. Prisoners can talk on the phone for ten minutes a week. Visiting hours for prisoners are one hour.

### Letters are delayed

The report said letters could take up to 70 days to leave the prison. A letter written by political prisoner Mustafa Abi to prisoners in the women's jail had not arrived for three months. Many of the letters sent keep coming back. The costs of sending letters are very high. The authorities did not allow letters from several people to be sent to one address in a single envelope.

## Political newspapers not allowed

Political prisoners are refused access to the left-wing newspaper Evrensel. Other daily newspapers always arrive late. Magazines are distributed arbitrarily by the prison authorities.

## Blackmail attempts by the Executive Committee

It is also reported that the prison committee is trying to put pressure on prisoners who have completed their sentence. There are always questions about whether the prisoners will become politically active after their release. If the prisoners answered in the affirmative, they would be refused release.

## Situation of ill prisoners increasingly difficult

The report said that despite requests, relatives of ill prisoners did not receive reports on the diagnoses of their relatives and doctors rarely visited political prisoners.

The case of Suphi Aydın was cited as an example in the report. He suffers from kidney failure, high blood pressure, prostate and heart disease, vascular blockages, low blood counts and faints from time to time. He has contacted the health committee three times, once the one in Tarsus and twice the one in Mersin, but neither he nor his family were given any reports. He has twice requested that the medical reports be handed over to his children, to no avail. His health is deteriorating, particularly because he cannot get enough water in prison and is not given the right medication.

The situation of prisoner Mustafa Abi is similar. He suffers from diabetes and stomach and intestinal problems. There are other ill prisoners in the same cell block. For both chronic and other illnesses, prisoners are denied treatment or only given limited treatment.

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## SGDF: Prison won't break young people

ANF | ISTANBUL | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

As many reports expose, prisons in Turkey are used as torture centers, especially for political prisoners. Discriminatory policies against ill prisoners, disciplinary sanctions and violence by guards continue to increase, while street protests are attacked by police.

Okan Danacı and Yaren Tuncer, co-chairs of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF), were in prison for six months. They were arrested in March and have just been released. In this interview they spoke about rights violations in prisons and the current struggles of young people.

## **Security clearance for visits**

Danacı said that there is a huge problem in Turkish prisons that needs to be analyzed and discussed, and that the violation of rights is particularly observed during visiting hours. He said: “There is real isolation in Turkish prisons. Visitors are subject to a security check. Many friends cannot come to the visit. People who have already been arrested or who are under investigation are turned away by the prison administration without any explanation.”

## **Difficult access to information sources**

Among those arbitrarily arrested are students whose right to education is being taken away, said Danacı, adding: “There are frequent raids on the cells and there are restrictions on various items and books. There are requirements by which prisoners can't have more than ten books, and in any case only certain books or clothes are allowed. At the same time, it is difficult to gain access to information sources such as radio and television. The costs of this are enormous. There are many more specific problems and obstacles for women.”

## **Isolation, oppression and intimidation**

Danacı described the prison as a “situation of isolation, oppression and intimidation” and reported how another SGDF member who was arrested last May, was tried to be recruited as an informant by the police or MIT. “When he was told by unknown people that he had a visit with his lawyer he was met by some police officers. They pressured our friend to become a spy and offered him cooperation. That's also part of the intimidation. These rights violations will be an important issue in our struggle in the near future.”

## **Young people cannot be oppressed**

Since the elections in May, a sad mood has spread throughout society and the way out of this situation can only be achieved through struggle, said the SGDF chair, adding: “There is an atmosphere of frustration, which has arisen especially after the elections. One of our main tasks is to spread the struggle everywhere and to protest on the streets, in universities, on campuses. We must bring together young people in the fight for freedom and justice and we need to organize together. At the same time, there are always workers' resistance and protests voicing various social demands. The Alevi community, for example, is protesting. High school students are protesting. Women are waging an autonomous struggle. Young people must also play their role in the struggle. We believe we will succeed. Our history shows us this. Young people cannot be silenced so easily. You can't bring them under control.”

## **If you criticize the government, you risk going to prison**

Yaren Tuncer said that “the AKP-MHP government puts everyone protesting or criticizing them in prison. Anyone who says something on the street or in an interview that the government doesn't like will quickly find themselves in prison. Women are more affected by rights violations because prisons in Turkey are geared towards men.”

The SGDF chair spoke about her experience in prison and said that it was very difficult to get access to hygiene, personal care and cleaning products. "Products such as sanitary pads and tampons are often not available. Sanitary pads are only available in one variety, and the canteen sells sanitary pads with an expiration date of 2021. This situation has not changed, although we have repeatedly pointed it out and discussed it. The sale and purchase of tampons is not permitted and they are not considered appropriate in prison. At the same time, when you go to visit or exercise, you already have a limited right to exercise and you are constantly exposed to security guards' comments about what you are wearing. Women are being spied on by cameras in their cells. They try to limit the prisoner' world and exert constant control over them. For example, they do not accept coloured hair clips, only black hair pins. These measures are very specifically directed against political prisoners. Because political prisoners have achieved their rights after years of struggle and at great cost, and now there are constant attempts to take away these rights and, in particular, to interfere with the way of life of women."

### **Break the fascist alliance**

Yaren Tuncer pointed out that from now on the struggle carried out by young people will increase, and underlined that the post-election disappointment can be overcome by taking to the streets and fighting. "We can reverse this process, this disappointment, by increasing the struggle on the streets, by trying to break this fascist alliance, by being aware that democracy, freedom, equality and justice are in the hands of the oppressed and that they can only be achieved with our organized strength."



## **Political prisoners in Sincan women's jail write to CPT**

ANF | ANKARA | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Women imprisoned for political reasons at the Sincan prison complex in Ankara have asked the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) to investigate rights violations in Turkish prisons.

The letter drew attention to the deaths and discrimination against Kurds in Turkey's prison system. The political prisoners in Sincan women's prison wrote: "The deaths in Turkish prisons continue. On 30 August, our friend Şakir Turan died in Erzincan L-type prison. 70-year-old Şakir Turan was a seriously ill prisoner who was not released despite a cancer diagnosis. As a Kurd and a politician, he had to die to prove that he was ill. The State Institute for Forensic Medicine (ATK) found in a report that despite his cancer diagnosis, he had the right to remain in prison. The ATK's decision regarding Şakir Turan was a clear sign that political prisoners are being held because of political decisions."

The letter continued: "According to the human rights association IHD's report for 2022, at least 81 prisoners died in Turkish prisons. These deaths were never investigated and remain suspicious. As a result, every death under government control is murder. Most of the dead were ill prisoners. These prisoners were targeted because of their thoughts and political activities, particularly because they are Kurds."



## Is the CPT waiting for sick prisoners to die?

The letter added: "In prisons, discriminatory and racist practices against the Kurdish people are carried out. Even small democratic demands from prisoners are treated and punished in an irrational manner by the prison administration. The CPT would come to the same conclusion even with a limited investigation of prisons in Turkey. While the number of deaths of Kurdish political prisoners in jails is increasing, many convicted members of Ergenekon, Hezbollah and the mafia, thieves, rapists and drug traffickers are being released through a special law. The recently passed enforcement law enables the release of many criminals, but tightens the conditions for Kurdish prisoners. A concrete example of this is the fact that the recently passed law resulted in the postponement of the release of 313 political prisoners."

The women said: "In the prison where we are (Sincan Closed Women's Prison), 14 of our friends are being held under this law even though they should have been released two years ago. Ultimately, 88 ill prisoners could also be directly affected by this law. Is the CPT waiting for ill prisoners to die before doing anything? The truth is that many prisoners who have completed their sentence in prison and have no disciplinary sanctions are not released because they do not regret being Kurdish."

## Call to action

The women continued: "There is torture in Turkish prisons and there are enforcement measures that are clearly illegal. Tens of thousands of people are subjected to fascist and racist practices in Turkish prisons. Systematic deaths and murders are the result of these practices. This new law eliminates prisoners' right to hope. While seriously ill prisoners are left to die, their right to family visits is restricted. The CPT should open an investigation because torture and the right to life are violated in prisons in Turkey. The outcome of the report should be made available to the public and Turkey, which is responsible for these violations, should be warned and condemned. Our demand and expectation from you is that you act immediately."

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## Kurdish political prisoner on death row begins hunger strike in Urmia

ANF | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Nayab Askari, a Kurdish political prisoner facing a death sentence, went on a hunger strike on 28 September in Urmia, West Azerbaijan Province, in protest at the Iranian security authorities' continued pressure to issue a second death sentence against him, the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) reported.

Following the announcement of his hunger strike, Askari was immediately moved to solitary confinement on the orders of the prison authorities, according to KHRN.

In June, on the orders of the Ministry of Intelligence in Urmia, Askari was transferred from the political prisoners' ward to Dormitory 3, where prisoners in a state of uncertainty are held.

Askari had been sentenced to death by Branch Two of the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Urmia on charges of “enmity against God” (moharebeh) for his affiliation with the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK).

On 27 September, Askari was also tried in the Urmia Criminal Court on charges of “involvement in the murder” of an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander.

Mostafa Soltani, an IRGC commander in Urmia, had been seriously injured in a confrontation with PJAK members in 2014 and died in March 2021 as a result of complications from COVID-19.

The deceased commander’s family, in collaboration with the IRGC Intelligence Organisation and the Ministry of Intelligence in Urmia, filed a complaint against Askari, alleging his involvement in the incident that led to Soltani’s injuries, which they claimed was the cause of his death six years later.

## **Background**

Askari was arrested in Urmia on 24 March 2021 by the Intelligence Organisation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

He was sent to Urmia Central Prison after spending three months in the detention facility of the IRGC’s intelligence organisation.

Prior to his arrest, Askari lived in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for several years.

In 2018, during his stay in the Kurdistan Region, the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Urmia sentenced him to death in absentia on charges of “enmity against God” (Moharebeh) through “membership” in the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK).

Following the political prisoner’s appeal against the ruling, the verdict was overturned, and the case was referred to Branch Two of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Urmia.

In April 2023, Branch Two of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Urmia sentenced Askari to death and payment of a fine of nine billion rials – nearly 18,000 USD – on charges of “enmity against God” (moharebeh) through “membership” of PJAK.

In August 2021, a court sentenced Askari and two other Kurdish political prisoners, Keyhan Mokarram and Nayeb Hajizadeh, to 50 lashes and three months in prison.

The sentence came after the head of Urmia Central Prison filed a complaint, accusing the prisoners of “disrupting the prison order” due to their involvement in a fight between several political prisoners and general crime prisoners.

The case was filed following a general prisoners’ beating of a Kurdish political prisoner.

On 26 July 2021, Askari went on a 32-day hunger strike to protest against the judicial authorities’ failure to issue an order for transferring him to a hospital outside the prison for treatment.



## Activists say that life and health of ill prisoners are under threat

ANF | 1 OCTOBER 2023

The Human Rights Association (IHD) Istanbul Branch Prison Commission held the 601st of its weekly "F Session" in front of the branch building. In this week's action, attention was drawn to the health condition of 78's Initiative spokesperson Celalettin Can, who is held in Silivri Prison No. 5. People's Democratic Congress (HDK) co-spokespersons Esengül Demir and Cengiz Çiçek, Green Left Party provincial co-chairs İlknur Birol and Murat Kalmaz, Labor Movement Party (EHP) chair Hakan Öztürk and many activists attended the action.

Ismet Evren, an activist of the 78's Initiative, said that enemy law was applied to ill prisoners. Evren said that Celalettin Can suffered from stomach and eye diseases as well as prostate cancer, and that, in addition, he had a platinum stuck in his foot after a traffic accident he suffered in 2011. The prisoner cannot meet his needs on his own.

Evren said that "Celalettin Can will lose his sight if he is not treated," and added that the release of Can, who has the right to probation, was prevented.

### Ankara

The Freedom for Ill Prisoners Initiative continued its weekly protest in front of the Ankara Branch of the Human Rights Association (IHD) on its 473rd week in order to draw attention to the situation of ill prisoners. During the action, attention was drawn to the situation of 72-year-old seriously ill prisoner Mehmet Emin Çam, who is held in Batman T Type Closed Prison.

IHD Central Executive Board (MYK) member Nuray Çevirmen said that there are more than 1,500 ill prisoners in total, 500 of whom are seriously ill, and called for Çam to be released as soon as possible due to his illness.



## Kurdish civil rights activist denied access to medical care in Sanandaj Prison

ANF | 1 OCTOBER 2023

The Kurdish Human Rights Network (KHRN) said in a statement that Kurdish civil rights activist Hiro Ghadimi faces inadequate conditions and is denied access to necessary medical care in the women's ward of Sanandaj Prison.

The statement said that "Ghadimi, who suffers from migraines, high blood pressure, and a herniated disc, has been transferred to solitary confinement in recent days, where she is unable to move due to her medical conditions and experiences ongoing health challenges."

Officials at Sanandaj Prison have refused to accept medication for Ghadimi from her family, depriving her of essential medical treatment since her arrest.

The statement added that "the civil rights activist, known for her advocacy work on children's and women's rights, as well as her assistance to individuals with special needs in Saqqez, was arrested by security forces at her family home on 12 September.

Recently, one of the branches of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Saqqez extended Ghadimi's detention for an additional month."

Throughout her detention, she has been denied access to legal representation.

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## Political prisoner Yılmaz Özalp passes away after belated release

ANF | 1 OCTOBER 2023

Former political prisoner Yılmaz Özalp has died in Izmir at the age of 43 as a result of a heart attack suffered in custody. Özalp had been sentenced to one year and seven months imprisonment and arrested for insulting the president and propaganda for a terrorist organisation. On 5 August, he suffered a heart attack at the Şakran T-Type Prison in Izmir and was hospitalised.

During hospital treatment he was artificially respirated. At the same time, his arm was chained to the bed by the gendarmerie. On 14 August, the detention status was lifted for a period of three months. On Sunday morning, Yılmaz Özalp died in hospital. According to his relatives, Özalp was in good health before his arrest. The funeral is to take place in the Salihli district of Manisa province after the handover of his body.

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## Military aggression and occupation

## A week in Afrin: Kidnapping, looting, extortion, forced displacement

ANF | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

After the Turkish state invaded Afrin in 2018, it created a complete terrorist regime. Kidnapping, ransom, plunder, extortion, torture, execution and demographic change have become daily crimes.

The Turkish state's plan to resettle more than one million refugees in Syria is also being implemented as part of the ethnic cleansing project. While the Kurds are displaced from their own lands by force and massacres, they are replaced by the families of the mercenaries and refugees taking shelter in Turkey.

### Demographic change

According to ANHA news agency, 43 more refugees were deported from Istanbul in the last week and sent to the canton from the Hema border gate in Afrin's Jindirêsê district.

Meanwhile, the construction of the colonial houses, which started in the village of Sindiyankê in the Jindirêsê district at the beginning of March, was completed. The families of the "Sharqiye" mercenaries from Deir ez-Zor will be settled in those 50 units.

### Kidnapping and Ransom

The "Civil Police", the paramilitary criminal apparatus established by the Turkish state in the occupied areas, kidnapped two citizens returning to Afrin from the occupied Azaz. A ransom of 10 thousand dollars was requested from their families for their release. Where they are kept and their fate is unknown.

On 23 September, 3 people were kidnapped in Jindirês district. It was learned that the kidnapped people were Horo Oso (25) from the village of Aşkan, Ehmed Ali El İsa (33) and Luqman Mihemed Hesên (34) from the village of Dêr Belot.

In addition, 70 people who tried to cross the border were handed over to the mercenaries in Afrin and fined.

## SDF encircles two Syrian regime-affiliated groups which infiltrated the town of Dhiban

ANF | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have encircled two armed groups affiliated with the security apparatus of the Syrian regime, which infiltrated Dhiban town under cover of random artillery shelling, coming from Al-Mayadeen town on the western bank of the Euphrates River.

“Immediate security measures have been taken by our forces to establish stability and security in the area. They have facilitated the movement of civilians to safe zones in neighboring villages, ensuring their safety and preventing the mercenary groups from using them in their terrorist acts either until the armed mercenary groups are eliminated or forced to surrender,” said the SDF Media Center in a statement on Monday.

Throughout the clashes, a number of members of the armed groups were killed, and others sustained injuries, subsequently being transported to areas under the control of the Syrian regime on the western bank of the Euphrates River, according to SDF information. Meanwhile, indiscriminate shelling with mortar shells and artillery, originating from regions under the regime’s control on the west bank of the Euphrates, resulted in injuries to a number of residents and inflicted material damage to their properties.



## Villages in Til Temir under attack

ANF | TIL TEMIR | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

The military violence of the Turkish army and its jihadist allies against the autonomous region of Northern and Eastern Syria continues. Occupation forces took several villages near the district of Til Temir under heavy artillery fire on Monday. Several dozen artillery shells hit the village of Tel Karah Beit, northwest of Til Temir, causing massive damage to houses and cultivated land.

According to military sources, the village had also been targeted by shelling last night. The villages of Tawila and Tall Tawil in the west of Til Temir were also affected by the attacks.

Til Temir is a good 30 kilometres from the Turkish border and borders in the north on the illegal occupation zone that Turkey is running along its southern border in solidarity with jihadists in Rojava. Since 2019, the Christian-majority district has been in the aggressors’ crosshairs as part of a war of attrition, with periods of high intensity alternating with periods of low intensity. Over thirty villages have since been either occupied, depopulated or extensively destroyed. Almost as many villages lie directly on the front line - and thus in the permanent sights of the occupying forces.

The constant incursions by Turkey and its Islamist allies constitute violations of the ceasefire and de-escalation agreements concluded between the guarantor powers Russia and the USA with Turkey after the occu-

pation of Serêkaniyê (Ras al-Ain) and Girê Spî (Tal Abyad) in October 2019. Both Moscow and Washington nevertheless give Turkey a free hand. Other regions of the AANES are also permanently targeted by the Turkish military, which, however, remains largely unnoticed.

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## SDF refutes Turkish allegations about the killing of 15 fighters

ANF | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Media Center of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) published a clarification on its X (formerly Twitter) account refuting the latest Turkish claims about the ongoing fighting in North-East Syria.

“The Ministry of Defense of the Turkish occupation state claimed in statements on 20,23 and 24 September that 15 of our fighters were martyred while preparing for attacks in the regions of Manbij, Afrin and Serekaniye. The claims of the occupation ministry are baseless,” said the post by SDF Media Center.

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## YPG commander Aslan Qamişlo martyred in Turkish drone attack

ANF | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

The People’s Defence Units (YPG) announced the death of one of their commanders, Aslan Qamişlo, who was murdered on 17 September in a targeted drone attack by the Turkish state in North-East Syria.

On the day of the YPG commander’s martyrdom, Turkey carried out two drone strikes at once. The first attack targeted a vehicle on the road between Qamişlo and Amûdê, in which the YPG commander was travelling together with a fighter from the local security force, Asayish. When people rushed to help them, the scene was attacked again, leaving eight civilians injured, some seriously.

Aslan Qamişlo was born in 1974 in a village in the Çukurca district of Hakkari. As an adolescent, he joined the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). After long years in the resistance in the mountains, including the regions of Botan, Zagros, Behdinan and Qandil, he went to Rojava in 2013 to participate in the defence of the revolution. He participated in numerous offensives against ISIS and other jihadist militias and was involved at commando level in the liberation of Kobanê, Raqqa, Tabqa, Manbij and Deir ez-Zor. He also played a decisive role in the establishment and expansion of the Asayish.

The YPG paid tribute to Aslan Qamişlo, defining him as a courageous revolutionary, freedom fighter and pioneer of his people. “Even under the most difficult conditions, our commander did not pause for a moment and continued his struggle with the enthusiasm of the revolution he carried in his heart. With great will to succeed and determination, he walked his revolutionary march, took part in the training of thou-

sands of fighters, left his mark on all the people he met. Comrade Aslan was one of those companions who made the greatest efforts for the development of our revolution with the depth of the Apoist personality. He inscribed his name with golden letters in the history of the revolution.”

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## HPG: Six soldiers were killed in guerrilla actions in memory of Tolhildan Goyî and Rûken Zelal

ANF | BEHDINAN | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) and HPG (People's Defence Forces) continue the resistance against the Turkish invading forces in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

According to the HPG Press Center statement on Tuesday, at least six Turkish soldiers were killed and two others injured in actions carried out by the guerrillas in the Zap region between 23 and 26 September (today). The actions were dedicated to Sara Tolhildan Goyî (Dilara Ürper) and Rûken Zelal (Feremez Hisên), who infiltrated a police base in the southern Turkish coastal metropolis of Mersin on 26 September 2022 night. The two women entered the base, killed the entrance guard with pistol shots and then penetrated inside. They opened fire with long guns and then blew themselves up among policemen.

In the Zap region, one soldier was killed in a sabotage action in the Kurojahro Resistance Area on 23 September.

In the Girê Cûdî Resistance Area on the Şehîd Delîl western Zap front, guerrillas struck the occupation forces 16 times with heavy weapons on 24-25 September.

In the Girê Amediyê Resistance Area, mobile guerrilla units hit the occupation forces with heavy weapons on 24 September, killing three and injuring two others. Two other soldiers were killed by snipers on 25-26 September.

In the Girê Ortê Resistance Area in Metîna, the guerrillas took action against Turkish invading forces. Strikes by the guerrillas targeted the occupation forces on 24 September, and the Turkish units bombing the tunnel facilities on 25 September.

On the other hand, the regions of Şehîd Delîl and Metîna were bombed by attack helicopters on 24, 25, 26 September, while the regions of Zap, Şehîd Delîl, Metîna and Xakurkê were shelled with artillery.

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## SDF publishes names of three of its fighters who died defending Diban

ANF | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

According to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the armed groups of the regime in Damascus, which entered Diban on Monday night, have been pushed out of the village in the east of Deir ez-Zor after fierce fighting. According to a statement by the SDF media center, the attackers barricaded themselves in residential buildings and a mosque. 20 gunmen were killed in the fighting and 31 injured were taken to a hospital in the Damascus-controlled city of al-Mayadin. Four SDF members lost their lives while repelling the gunmen's attack, which was accompanied by artillery fire from al-Mayadin, west of the Euphrates.

The SDF indicated that the gunmen were supported by government forces and were using heavy machine guns, artillery and mortar shells. The grenades hit residential buildings and the market, killing one civilian and injuring other people. In addition, public buildings were again looted and vandalized.

“Our forces immediately took the necessary measures to ensure security and stability in the region and facilitated the movement of civilians to safe areas in neighbouring villages to prevent armed mercenaries from implicating them in their terrorist attack,” the SDF said.

The identities of three fallen SDF fighters have been made public. Nour Shalash al-Faraj (codename Ciwan Heseke, born in 1999 in Heseke), Ridwan Talal Khalil (codename Mihemed, born in 2005 in Hol) and Ali Muhammad Issa (codename Egîd, born in 2000 in al-Ghurairi) died on 25 September defending Diban.

The small town of Diban, also known as Ziban, south of Deir ez-Zor, was already scenario of a large-scale security operation by the SDF against ISIS cells and other armed groups at the end of August. The latest attacks indicate that the regime is making a renewed attempt to wreak havoc in the region.

The SDF carried out an “Operation Security Reinforcement” in Deir ez-Zor from 27 August 27 to 8 September. Nine civilians and 25 SDF fighters were killed in armed clashes. In addition, 23 members of the armed groups were neutralized and a further 21 people were arrested. Among them were four mercenaries from the Syrian regime militia Difa al-Watani (also National Defense Forces, or NDF for short) and two ISIS members.

## YCWK units hit Scorpion-type armor vehicle on Adana-Mersin highway

ANF | ADANA | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Kurdistan Patriotic Youth Union (Yekîtiya Ciwanên Welatparêzên Kurdistan-YCWK), which announced its establishment on 17 September, carried out an action against the Scorpion type armored vehicle belonging to the Turkish state on the Adana-Mersin highway on 24 September. The action was carried out at a check-point.

In the statement, the YCWK said: “It is time to fulfill the promise we made to our martyrs.”

The statement added: “Our units carried out an action at around 21.40 on 24 September against a Scorpion type armored vehicle, which we found to be constantly stationed on the Adana-Mersin road route, checking IDs and exerting psychological pressure on our patriotic people.

The armored vehicle was hit and was withdrawn from the area when reinforcement teams arrived. After the action, our units left the area safely.”

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## ISIS leader apprehended in North Syria

ANF | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

In light of the close partnership and the exchange of vital data and intelligence between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the international coalition against ISIS in the regions of north and eastern Syria, the International Coalition apprehended, last Saturday, the leader of the ISIS terrorist organization, Abu Halil al-Fad’ani in north Syria.

Following his capture by the coalition, the Syrian Democratic Forces took the aforementioned terrorist, Al-Fad’ani, into custody. Interrogations are now underway, focusing on his involvement in crimes against our people and his orchestration of terrorist activities across several nations, according to SDF Media Centre.

“The Syrian Democratic Forces wish to underscore the enduring strength of our partnership and our unwavering commitment to continued joint operations with the International Coalition forces in north and eastern Syria to achieve the lasting elimination of ISIS terrorist cells,” said the statement.

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## Turkish drone attack on a village in Qandil results in casualties

ANF | QANDIL | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

Turkey bombed the community of Binarê Qendîl in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on Wednesday morning. According to information from the region, the village of Bokrîskan was hit by two successive drone strikes.

The co-mayor of Binarê Qendîl, Serwîn Celal, told RojNews: “An unmanned armed drone of the Turkish state bombed the village of Bokrîskan twice in a row today. One woman was seriously injured in the attack and hospitalised. There was also heavy damage to property in the bombing.”

RojNews further reported that Mirza Îbrahim and Estî Muhammed were taken to the hospital in Ranya. Estî Muhammed could not be saved and succumbed to serious injuries. Mirza Îbrahim is still receiving treatment in Ranya.

At the beginning of September, the town hall of Binarê Qendîl was bombed by a Turkish combat drone. During the attack, a truck was hit in front of the building. The bombing started a fire, which caused considerable damage to property. There are a total of 63 smaller and larger villages in the town that are repeatedly subjected to Turkish attacks. According to a report by the local government, at least 25 civilians were killed in such attacks between 2007 and 2021, and dozens were injured. The Turkish state’s most deadly attack in Binarê Qendîl so far was the Zergelê massacre in August 2015. Fighter jets had bombed the village in three waves of attacks, killing eight people from the civilian population. Another 15 people were injured, some of them seriously.



## One killed, two injured as occupation forces attack a village in Raqqa

ANF | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Turkish state forces and allied mercenaries continue committing crimes in North-East Syria, where they have already occupied territories and seek to invade further areas in violation of international law.

According to reports from the ground, Turkish and jihadist forces shelled the village of al-Hadiriayah in the Hishe district of Raqqa on Wednesday.

The intense shelling claimed the life of 35-year-old Omer Mihamed el-Cewîd and left two other civilians injured.

On the other hand, reports are coming through of aggression in the district of Til Temir, in Heseke Canton.

The village of al-Dirdarah has been targeted by the occupation forces with heavy weaponry. Details about the aggression were not immediately available.



## More civilians kidnapped in Turkish-occupied Afrin

ANF | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

According to local sources, Turkish-backed mercenaries kidnapped a woman and a man from the village of Şêxûtka in Afrin's Mabata district. The kidnapped civilians, identified as Ehad Seydo and Nezîre Hemîd Mihemed, were taken to an undisclosed location and no news has been received from them since their abduction.

On the other hand, the paramilitary criminal network "Civil Police" kidnapped 29-year-old Hisên Dilo from the village of Hêkêçe in Shiye district.

In the meantime, members of the Ankara-affiliated al-Hamzat mercenary group have cut down hundreds of trees in the vicinity of the village of Mizê in Shera district.

Another mercenary group, Sultan Murat, asked for a ransom of 2 thousand dollars from the family of Horo Hesên Hiso in return for giving him back his house in the village of Dêrsewan in Shera district.

According to another source, the Ahrar al-Sharqiya mercenaries are opening "commerce" offices in Afrin and renting the houses of the local people who were forcibly displaced by the use of violence, threats and atrocities. The houses are reportedly rented for 2 to 4 thousand dollars to the foreigners brought in from outside the region. The shops of the displaced locals are rented for a thousand dollars for a year.

### Over 200 people kidnapped in seven months

According to the Afrin-Syria Human Rights Organization, 208 citizens, including 24 women and a child, have been abducted since the beginning of 2023. During the same period of time, at least 13 people, including 3 women, were killed. More than 16,000 trees were cut down, over a thousand trees were uprooted and over 70 hectares of land were burned.

In a statement on August 10, the organization stated that, "The invading Turkish state systematically violates human rights by carrying out crimes such as massacres, kidnappings, violence, ransoms, confiscation of people's properties, reselling the confiscated materials in the market and plundering the environment."

### Background

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.



## KCK commemorates the recent martyrs of the Kurdish people

ANF | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Co-Presidency of the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) Executive Council released a statement on Seyit Evran, a pioneer for a free and democratic press in Kurdistan, the latest attacks on civilians in Qandil and on the death of dozens at a wedding in Mosul.

KCK expressed their condolences and expressed that they shared the pain of the families and friends of the more than a hundred people who were killed and dozens injured in a fire in a wedding hall in Mosul.

"We are deeply saddened by this tragic event. We wish Allah's mercy to those who lost their lives and send our condolences to their families and relatives, and we would like to wish a speedy recovery to the wounded," said the KCK.

Paying tribute to Kurdish journalist Seyit Evran who passed away in North-East Syria on 22 September, KCK stated: "The martyrdom of Seyit Evran, one of the pioneers of the democratic and free Press, is commemorated by the Movement of Democratic Free Press, the people of Kurdistan and dozens of democratic organizations. Comrade Seyit was a great revolutionary who demonstrated with his life and stance that understanding the truth means living it and being part of it. We would like to respectfully and with gratitude commemorate all the martyrs of the revolution and democracy in his person, and we reiterate our promise of success to the martyrs."

The statement pointed out that: “As a result of the most recent attacks of the genocidal colonialist Turkish state, many people were killed and injured. Also, the mountains of Qandil were one of the places targeted by the recent attacks. The villages of Enzê and Bokriskan were attacked by Turkish bombs. In the attack on Enzê village, a villager’s vehicle was targeted and as a result of the attack on Bokriskan village, a villager was martyred and another one got wounded. We would like to express our deep condolences to the relatives of the martyrs and the people of Qandil and wish a fast recovery to the wounded. This massacre proves once again that the sole aim of the Turkish state is the killing of Kurds. We strongly condemn these attacks and massacres and call on everyone to stand up for the people of Qandil and take a strong stance against the attacks and massacres of the Turkish state. The Turkish state is very uncomfortable with the presence of the people of Qandil and therefore targets them specifically. The people of Qandil are wanted to be intimidated by attacks, because they do not give up their patriotic attitude. No matter how much the genocidal colonialist fascist Turkish state attacks, it will not be able to intimidate the valiant people of Qandil.”



## The body of HPG guerrilla Fedekar Hêlîn given to his family after 10 month wait

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

The body of HPG guerrilla Fedekar Hêlîn (Mazlum Akman), who fell as a martyr with his 3 comrades in the bombardment by the Turkish state in the Gabar region of Şirnak on 2 December 2022, was given to his family 10 months later.

Although the family gave a blood sample for the identification of the body, the remains were buried unannounced in the Cemetery of the nameless.

As a result of the DNA test performed with the blood sample taken from the family, it was confirmed that the body belonged to HPG guerrilla Hêlîn. Thereupon, his family went to Şirnak from Savur district of Mardin. Following the prosecutor’s office procedures, the family took the remains of their son from the Cemetery of the nameless and set out for Barman.

On the other hand, the body of YJA Star guerrilla Silav Koçer (Behiye Kaçar), who lost her life in the same bombardment, was taken by her family. The remains of Egîd Nîzîp (Yakup Demir), however, are still in the Cemetery of the nameless.



## Soldiers storm houses in the village under military siege for 2,5 months

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

The village of Ormaniçi (ku: Bana) in the Güçlükonak district of Şırnak has been besieged by the Turkish army for two months.

The village was besieged after the eruption of skirmishes between the Kurdish guerrillas and Turkish soldiers in July. A de facto state of emergency has been in place in the village since and there is a ban on entering and leaving the village.

On 15 September, the Governor's Office in Şırnak imposed a 15-day ban on entering and leaving 5 areas in the vicinity of the village. The residents are not even allowed to take care of their gardens and call on human rights organizations to take action.

Early this morning, Turkish soldiers stormed many houses in the village and a 60-year-old shepherd named Hacı Savun was reportedly taken into custody.

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## Guerrilla actions in memory of Seyit Evran

ANF | BEHDINAN | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) and HPG (People's Defence Forces) continue the resistance against the Turkish invading forces in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

The HPG Press Center statement on Thursday paid tribute to revolutionary Seyit Evran who died in North-East Syria on 22 September. "We respectfully commemorate our comrade Seyit Evran, who took over the resistant essence of the mountains of Kurdistan and carried it to all places. Through the masterful use of his language and pen, he defended our people on the ideological front against special war and capitalist modernity. The voice of free life for which Comrade Seyit Evran fought without ceasing for 33 years will always echo in the mountains of Kurdistan. It will be carried to all places in Kurdistan and crowned with the final victory."

"In actions carried out in memory of Comrade Seyit, three occupiers were punished, a drone loaded with explosives and a generator were destroyed, and a shovel, a van and an armoured vehicle were hit. In addition, our forces intervened twice against helicopters and attacked and hit the occupiers 22 times," said the statement, which detailed the actions as follows:

## Zap

On 26 September, a van of the Turkish occupation forces moving between the resistance areas of Saca and Kurojahro was hit by the guerrillas with heavy weapons.

### Şehîd Delîl, Western Zap region

In the Girê FM resistance area, a Turkish army generator was destroyed, and an armoured vehicle was damaged on 26 September.

In the Girê Cûdî resistance area, YJA Star guerrillas carried out 14 actions with heavy weapons in the past two days. On 26 September, a sniper shot down a drone loaded with explosives above a tunnel facility. On the same day, a soldier was killed by a sniper. On 27 September, YJA Star guerrillas stopped a shovel excavator by striking it with heavy weapons. On the same day, guerrillas carried out two more actions with heavy weapons.

In the Girê Amêdîyê resistance area, the occupation forces were struck twice with heavy weapons on 26 September. On 27 September night, the guerrillas intervened twice with heavy weapons against helicopters over the area. On 27 September evening, two soldiers were killed in an action with semi-automatic weapons.

### Metîna

In the Girê Orte resistance area, the occupation forces were hit with heavy weapons on 24 September. On 25 September, the guerrillas intervened with assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons against a Turkish unit bombing a tunnel. On 27 September, an action with semi-automatic weapons targeted an advancing unit in the area.

### Xakurke

In the Şehîd Bêrîtan area, an advancing squad of the Turkish army was struck with assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons on 23 September.

### Traitor punished in Botan

A traitor was punished in Botan on 15 September. The traitor is Nazmi Sümer, born in 1975, from the village of Sîxurpaşa in Şırnak's Beytüşşebap district, located in the Kato area of Botan. Sümer reportedly collaborated with the enemy. Due to his denunciation, guerrillas Îrfan Dîrok (Akif Turan), Şoreş Karer (Çavuş Abbaszade), Baran Bilbêsî (Bayram Hakseven) and Devrim Doğan (Ahmet Karaaslan) died in 2018.

HPG stated that Sümer came from a patriotic family and, above all, betrayed his origins: "He continued to collaborate with the enemy and informed the enemy about the guerrillas' locations in the Kato area. The Kurdish people and every Kurdish individual must be vigilant in the face of the Turkish state's attempts to recruit agents among the population. No one must allow themselves to be used by the enemy,



everyone must show a clear stance against collaboration and betrayal. Many mistakes are forgivable, but betrayal that leads to the death of freedom fighters cannot be excused,” stated the HPG.

### Attacks by the Turkish army

The guerrilla tunnels in the Girê Amêdî area were bombed twice by drones on 26 September, and prohibited explosives were used on 26 September. The Metîna region was bombed twelve times by fighter jets on 27 September, affecting the areas of Gundê Bazê, Gundê Beşîlî, Gundê Dergelê, Gundê Golka and Girê Ortê. Metîna and the western Zap region were attacked by attack helicopters on 27 September. Artillery attacks were carried out on Zap, West Zap, Metîna and Xakurke.

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## Armed attack by AKP executive leaves one dead and four injured

ANF | VAN | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

AKP’s former Ipekyolu district chair Murat Beşenk and his relatives attacked the house of the Birik family with weapons. Göksel Birik lost his life in the attack, while Doğukan Birik (23), Semih Birik (32), Mustafa Birik (16), Yusuf Birik (17) were injured. Semih Birik, one of the injured who is being treated in the hospital in the city, continues to be in critical condition.

No arrests were made after the incident. The body of Göksel Birik was taken to the Forensic Medicine Institute (ATK). A large number of police, TOMAs and detention vehicles were dispatched in front of ATK.

According to the eyewitness, there were 4 Scorpion type armored vehicles at the scene when AKP members were scanning the house. According to the witness, the mother of Göksel Birik said: “My child died in front of the police. If they had wanted it, my son would not have died.”

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## Armed attack in a restaurant in Sulaymaniyah leaves one person dead and one injured

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

At the end of August, Hasan Usta, a kebab maker, was found dead in Sulaymaniyah. On Thursday night his two sons were attacked with guns.

One of the brothers lost his life and the other was seriously injured.

No one has been detained so far, said the Sulaymaniyah public order service after launching an investigation.

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## Manbij Military Council carries out new precise defensive attack in Manbij

ANF | MANBIJ | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

According to the local military council, four members of the Turkish-linked mercenaries' occupation troops were killed and three others were injured in a "precise defensive attack" in Manbij, northern Syria. The Manbij Military Council said on Thursday that the attack took place on Monday evening in response to attempted attacks by mercenaries under Turkish command.

The military council said the attackers had positioned themselves in the area of the village of Saydiyah in the northwest of Manbij. After long-term observation of activities there and in the surrounding areas of other villages along the contact line between the Turkish occupation zone and the northeast Syrian autonomous region, the planned wave of attacks was responded to "on the basis of legitimate self-defense". The "tactical strike" successfully prevented both attacks against their own posts and civilian settlement areas, it said.

Manbij is located 30 kilometers south of the Turkish border and occupies a key strategic position in Turkey's plans to expand its illegal occupation zone in northern Syria. The city, administered by the Autonomous Administration, is located on the important M4 motorway, which runs through northern Syria as a lifeline and has already represented a strategic supply route for ISIS.

In 2022, Manbij was named by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, along with Tel Rifat, as the first target for a renewed Turkish invasion of Northern and Eastern Syria. There are repeated attacks by the Turkish army and allied mercenaries, which are mainly aimed at civilian settlement areas in an attempt to drive the population out of the area.

A week ago, the Manbij military council carried out a reprisal attack against the jihadist militia "Sultan Murat Brigade". According to the military council, five mercenaries were killed and seven others injured in the revenge operation carried out for the deaths of three YPJ fighters.

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## Turkish state attacked villages of Ain Îsa and Girê Spî dozens of times in September

ANF | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Turkish state continued to systematically target civilian settlements in North-East Syria in September.

The villages of Ain Îsa and Girê Spî were attacked dozens of times. After the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launched an operation against ISIS mercenaries and drug dealers in the Deir ez-Zor countryside on 27 August, the Turkish state and its mercenaries escalated their attacks.

According to the September balance sheet prepared by ANHA, a villager named Mihemed El Ciwêd (35) lost his life and two people were injured as a result of heavy weapons bombardment of the village of Hedriyat, located 7 km east of Ain Îsa, on 27 September.

A total of 5 villagers were injured in the attacks targeting Ain Îsa and Girê Spî villages.

Turkish state mercenaries attempted to infiltrate by land the villages of Sêgîro and Tirwaziyê in the west of Til Temir on 3 September. In the clashes that occurred when SDF fighters responded to the attempt, 7 mercenaries were killed and 7 were injured.

Civilian infrastructures were also targeted in the attacks. As a result of the targeting of the power line leading to the Larvac cement production company on 7 September, electricity was cut off in all districts and villages in the west of the Girê Spî canton. As a result of the same power line being targeted again on 18 September, repaired electricity services were cut off once again.

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## HPG: Four Turkish soldiers were killed by snipers in Zap

ANF | BEHDINAN | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) and HPG (People's Defence Forces) continue the resistance against the Turkish invading forces in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

According to the HPG Press Center statement on Friday, four members of the Turkish occupation forces were killed as a result of strikes by guerrilla snipers in Girê Cûdî and Girê Amêdiyê areas in the Zap region on 28 September. Two of the actions were carried out by YJA Star guerrillas.

According to the statement, the guerrillas also carried out two actions with heavy weapons against occupiers at Girê Cûdî on the same day.

Regarding the attacks by the Turkish army, HPG said that the underground war tunnels of the guerrillas at Girê Amêdîyê were bombed four times by drones loaded with explosives. The guerrillas responded to three of these attacks with corresponding interventions.

The Cûdî and Amêdîyê resistance massifs are located in the western section of the Zap Front, which has again been the focus of the war in the region since mid-July as part of a new occupation operation by the Turkish state. These are the areas from which the invading troops of Turkey withdrew in flight at the end of last year.

On the other hand, Turkish occupiers bombed the underground war tunnels in Girê Çarçel area in Metîna four times with drones loaded with explosives on 27 September.

In the Qandil region, the area of Girê Hîwa was targeted by fighter jets on 27 September. Further attacks carried out by the Turkish army with tank and artillery fire targeted parts of Zap and Metîna.



## Young Yazidi girl saved by YPJ to be reunited with her family

ANF | HESEKE | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Women's Defense Units (YPJ) rescued a young Yazidi girl named Feryal Xidir Îbrahîm from ISIS mercenaries on 19 September.

Feryal Xidir Îbrahîm was 12 years old when ISIS mercenaries attacked Shengal. When the people of Shengal tried to escape from ISIS brutality, the mercenaries blocked their way and kidnapped many people from Feryal's family.

Feryal Îbrahîm was handed over to YBŞ in a ceremony held at the General Command headquarters of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Heseke. The ceremony was attended by the YPJ delegation headed by YPJ Spokesperson Rûksan Mihemed, Cizre Region Yazidis House co-chair Leyla Îbrahîm and the YBŞ delegation headed by commander Omer Şengalî.

YPJ Spokesperson Rûksan Mihemed called the attacks against the Yazidis genocide and said: "The Yazidi community remained loyal to their principles and religion despite the genocide and the many massacres against them. They did not accept to bow down, they resisted the mercenaries and they continue to resist."

Mihemed said: "With resistance and solidarity, we will thwart all the plans of the mercenaries. We promise all Yazidis that we will save them from the mercenaries and defend their rights."

### 'What happened in Shengal in 2014 will not be repeated'

Omer Şengalî thanked the YPJ for their efforts to save Yazidi women. He said: "What happened in Shengal in 2014 will not be repeated, because we will resist any attack."

On the other hand, Leyla İbrahim, co-chair of the Cizre Region Yazidi House, celebrated the role of the YPJ in saving Yazidi women and said: "We are very happy that our daughter Feryal was saved. We are also very happy about the YPJ's efforts to save our girls and citizens from the hands of ISIS."

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## Citizen from Serêkaniyê killed by Turkish soldiers

ANF | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

A citizen named Mesûd Naso, who was trying to go to Turkey late on Thursday night, was murdered near the village of Aliyê in Dirbêsiyê in Northern and Eastern Syria.

According to ANHA news agency, Naso, who was captured at the Turkish border, was subjected to violence by the soldiers. ANHA stated that Naso was murdered by soldiers and left at the Rojava border. It was reported that Naso was from Serêkaniyê.

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## HPG reports Turkish attacks with chemical weapons and tactical nuclear bombs

ANF | BEHDINAN | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

In its daily statement about the war in Kurdistan, the Press Centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) reported that the Turkish army is again increasingly using prohibited weapons in its ongoing invasion campaign in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

"The Turkish occupation army has not been able to achieve any result by using all the weapons of war at its disposal against the resistance areas and war tunnels in Zap. Although the guerrilla positions are continuously bombarded by fighter planes, helicopters, tanks, howitzers, tanks, heavy and semi-automatic weapons, all enemy attacks have come to nothing. The occupiers have suffered heavy blows in the face of modern guerrilla tactics, the level of their application and the performance of constant actions, and have fallen into a state where they can no longer protect themselves. Since 9 September, they have been seeking a way out of this situation by extending the occupation attacks across the Girê Amêdîyê to Metîna. Although they are supported by collaborators and traitors, they have not got the desired result here either. The occupation forces in Zap are in great distress and are not getting anywhere with their tactics. Therefore, they are again trying to get results by using prohibited explosives, chemical gases and tactical nuclear bombs. For several days, they have been committing war crimes in the Girê Amêdîyê and Girê Cûdî resistance areas through such attacks. We inform our patriotic people and the public about this and call them to attention."

The statement continued: "The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla responds with great courage and sacrifice to all the attacks and inhuman aggressions of the occupation army. It is active every day and deals heavy blows to the occupiers. During the latest actions of our forces in Zap, Metîna and Xakurke, four occupants were punished. In addition, an A4 position was destroyed and a howitzer was damaged."

Regarding the details of the guerrilla actions and the attacks of the Turkish army, HPG gave the following information:

### **Şehîd Delîl area in Western Zap**

In the Girê Cûdî resistance area, guerrillas damaged a Turkish army howitzer with shelling on 29 September. On the same day, a soldier was killed by a sniper from the Free Women's Troops (YJA Star).

### **Metîna**

YJA Star guerrillas hit the occupation forces in the Girê Çarçel resistance area with heavy weapons on 27 September.

### **Xakurke**

In the Girê Şehîd Derwêş area, an A4 position of the Turkish army was destroyed in an action by the YJA Star guerrillas with heavy weapons on 28 September. Three soldiers in the position were killed.

### **Attacks by the Turkish army with prohibited weapons**

The Turkish army used chemical weapons in the form of red gas in the guerrilla tunnels at Girê Amêdîyê on 24 and 25 September. On the same days, a tactical nuclear bomb and chemical weapons were used in a tunnel at Girê Cûdî. On 29 September, the tunnels at Girê Amêdî were bombed three times by drones loaded with explosives, and prohibited explosives were also used. Today at 5.40 a.m., another prohibited explosive was used in a tunnel at Girê Amêdî.

### **Further attacks by the Turkish army**

On the other hand, the regions of Zap and Metîna were bombed ten times by fighter jets on Saturday. The attack targeted Girê Bahar in the western Zap region and Serê Metîna, Gundê Dergelê and Golka in Metîna. The Turkish army also carried out artillery attacks in the Zap, Şehîd Delîl in Western Zap, Xakurkê and Metîna regions.

## Child killed, dozens injured in clashes between Turkish-backed mercenaries in Serekaniye

ANF | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

In the northern Syrian city of Serekaniye (Ras al-Ain) which has been occupied by the Turkish state and allied mercenaries since 2019, violent clashes erupted on Friday between the “Hamzat” mercenaries and the “Military Police” on the one hand, and mercenaries from different factions belonging to the Qaraan and Al-Aqidat tribes on the other hand.

According to the Hawar News Agency (ANHA), mercenaries engaged in clashes in the al-Kanais, Ahmed Kan and al-Kharabat areas with heavy weapons, resulting in deaths and injuries among the mercenaries, and leading to the death of a child and the injury of dozens of residents, including children and women.

Over 10 mercenaries reported to have been killed and injured during the course of the fighting were taken to hospitals in the occupied zone.

As a result of the clashes, 5 military vehicles belonging to mercenaries were destroyed. Reports are coming through of an intervention by the Turkish state forces to stop the fighting.

Residents of Serekaniye express serious concerns over the daily confrontations between the mercenary groups backed by the Turkish state.

The Kurdish town of Serêkaniyê is located on the border with Turkish territory and has been occupied since a war of aggression by Turkey in October 2019. The war at that time also resulted in the occupation of the town of Girê Spî (Tal Abyad), which lies to the west of Serêkaniyê. The Turkish army occupied the region with the help of its jihadist mercenary army, the so-called Syrian National Army (SNA), chemical weapons and fierce air attacks. Since then, a regime of terror has ruled in the region.

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## Explosions and gunshots heard in ministries' area in Ankara

ANF | ANKARA | 1 OCTOBER 2023

An explosion was heard in front of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, near the Parliament in Kızılay, in Ankara.

After the explosion, gunshots rang out. It is not yet known what caused the explosion. Ambulance and AFAP teams were dispatched to the area.

Atatürk Boulevard was closed to traffic, entry and exit to the Parliament was completely prohibited.

Media close to the government claimed that there was an attempt to carry out a grenade attack on the Ministry of Internal Affairs. No official statement was made.

Other pro-government media claimed that there was an attempted rocket attack. There are also allegations that one person was injured.



## HPG publishes balance sheet of war for September

ANF | BEHDINAN | 1 OCTOBER 2023

The Press Centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) published a balance sheet of war in Kurdistan for the month of September. Accordingly, guerrillas of the HPG and YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) carried out 507 actions against the Turkish army in the past month, killing 150 soldiers and injuring 38 others. Two Turkish drones were shot down and two grenade launchers, five positions and seven surveillance cameras were destroyed. In addition, six helicopters were damaged.

According to the balance sheet, the Turkish army carried out 149 airstrikes by fighter jets and used prohibited weapons such as chemical weapons, unconventional explosives and tactical nuclear bombs eight times. Five guerrillas were martyred in the attacks.

The HPG statement released on Sunday includes the following:

"The resistance of the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla in Bakur [Northern Kurdistan] and the Medya Defence Zones and the struggle against the genocidal attacks continue uninterruptedly. The self-sacrificial guerrillas are sharpening their minds, hearts and wills with the strength they get from the Apoist ideology. It overcomes all obstacles under the most difficult circumstances and fulfils its role. To fulfil its leadership mission in the Revolutionary People's War everywhere and at every moment, it continues to carry out its revolutionary tasks without hesitation with great sacrifice and courage in the Apoist self-sacrificial spirit.

Throughout September, the hostile attacks in Bakur and the Medya Defence Zones continued uninterruptedly. The Turkish colonial state aiming at genocide and its ultra-fascist AKP/MHP regime are trying by all means to destroy the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla and eradicate the Kurdish existence. However, the resistance of the guerrillas, their high war performance and their tactical level have ensured that the fascist regime could not achieve the desired results. The Turkish state has made it its main agenda to use all relations and negotiations in Turkey, the region and the world to fight the Kurdish freedom movement. It is, so to speak, begging for help against the guerrillas by selling all values and making unprincipledness its principle. The Turkish state bureaucracy, the leaders of the fascist regime and the special war media are continuously bringing up the Kurdish freedom struggle and the guerrilla. All this openly shows in what distress our liberation struggle has brought the Turkish colonial state and its fascist regime.

In Northern Kurdistan, the fascist AKP/MHP regime has used all the agents, contras, paramilitaries, security forces and military at its disposal against the guerrillas and carried out hundreds of extermination operations in September. However, the guerrillas succeeded in making these attacks come to nothing. Our



comrades-in-arms in Amed and Botan have resisted the enemy hordes and their helicopters and fighter jets with great courage and sacrifice after contact with the enemy. This resistance led by our self-sacrificial commander Axîn Mûş has gone down in the history of our struggle as a heroic example of the time. In September, Axîn Mûş (Hülya Demirer), Egîd Berxwedan (Habib Karakoç), Rohat Pasûr (Cihat Ay), Demhat Setkar (Çetin Temel) and Rênas Tolhildan (Ramazan Eliçümüş) fell in the courageous struggle.

In the Medya Defence Zones, the Turkish army has set up a war fair, so to speak, by bringing all its war technology there: radar, jammers, camera, autonomous weapons, thermal binoculars, telescopes, semi-automatic and heavy weapons, missiles, kamikaze and transport drones, artillery, armoured vehicles and tanks. The occupying army relies entirely on its technology in this war. Despite its equipment, it remains stuck in Zap and has not been able to protect itself from the constant blows of the guerrillas. In order to overcome the stagnation in Zap and expand the occupation operation across the Girê Amêdîyê into an important part of Metîna, it launched a new wave of attacks on 9 September. But this, too, has led to the Turkish army making itself even more of a target and suffering even greater losses.

In Bakur and the Medya Defence Zones, a relentless war is taking place every day and the results are being shared with our people and the public on a daily basis. Documentaries and recordings from this hot war are also published. The Turkish special war media does not pick up this information in any way and pretends that it does not exist. The fact that the army is not getting anywhere and suffering huge losses is not mentioned at all. Within a month, 150 of their soldiers have been punished. However, only the deaths of a few soldiers have been made public. The other losses were completely concealed. After it was revealed by our side that the body of soldier Ünal Sipahi was left in the resistance area in Zap, his family had to carry an empty coffin and the Turkish army is lying in a very immoral way, with dead soldiers not being reported at all. This fact alone is proof of what a dirty and immoral war the Turkish army and the fascist regime are waging.

A look at the one-month balance sheet alone will provide a better understanding of the resistance of the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla no matter how intense bombardments the Turkish army carries out and what blows it suffers at the hands of the guerrillas.”

The balance sheet of war for the month of September is as follows:

**Attacks by the Turkish army:** Attacks by fighter jets: 149; Attacks with chemical weapons: 2; Attacks with banned explosives: 5; Attacks with tactical nuclear bombs: 1

**Our martyrs:** Fallen comrades; 5

**Actions by the guerrillas:** Total number of guerrilla actions: 507; Ambush: 1; Infiltration: 2; Coordinated Action: 5; Attack: 5; Sabotage: 12; Assassination: 68; Clash-Blow: 95; Actions with heavy weapons: 319

**Enemy losses:** Number of occupiers punished: 150; Number of agents-counter-forces punished: 1; Number of occupiers injured: 38

**Equipment destroyed:** Drones: 2; Grenade throwers: 2; Surveillance Camera Systems: 7; Thermal Surveillance Camera Systems: 1; Banned Explosives: 1; Positions: 4; A4 weapons and positions: 2

**Equipment damaged:** Sikorsky helicopters: 3; Attack helicopters: 3; Scoops: 3; Positions: 175; Cable car system: 1; Van: 1; Howitzer: 1; Armored vehicle: 1



## Three civilians, including a woman, kidnapped in a village of Turkish-occupied Afrin

ANF | 1 OCTOBER 2023

The Human Rights Organization Afrin-Syria reported the abduction of three civilians in the northern Syrian canton of Afrin occupied by the Turkish state since 2018.

According to the report, the so-called “Civilian Police”, a paramilitary criminal network established by the Turkish state, kidnapped three civilians, including a woman, from the village of Mirkan in Mabata district.

The civilians, identified as Fehîme Ehmed Tahir (25), Mihemed Ehmed Mistefa Hacî (40) and Ebdu Ezet (30), were reportedly taken to a headquarters of the occupation forces and their aftermath remains unknown.

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.

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## Afrin and Shehba suffered more than 90 attacks in September

ANF - 1 OCTOBER 2023

In a statement on Sunday, the Press Office of Shehba Defence Forces announced that the Turkish state forces and affiliated mercenaries carried out 91 attacks on 40 locations in Afrin and Shehba between the 2nd and 20th of September.

According to the statement, 40 villages and towns in the cantons of Afrin and Shehba were targeted by 91 attacks with howitzers, mortars, missiles, tanks and unmanned aerial vehicles.

In total, 230 mortar shells, 263 howitzer shells and 4 suicide drones loaded with explosives were used in the attacks.

The attacks did not result in a loss of life but caused property damage to the citizens, said the statement.

At the same time, the occupation forces attacked a checkpoint of the Syrian government forces in the village of Beluniye in Shehba on 28 September. The attack left 4 Syrian soldiers injured.

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## HSM: Action in Ankara was carried out by the Brigade of Immortals

ANF | 1 OCTOBER 2023

The People's Defense Center Headquarters Command released a statement about the action that targeted the Security General Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs near the Parliament in Kızılay, in Ankara at 09:30 this morning.

The statement, according to which the sacrificial action was carried out by a team affiliated with the Brigade of the Immortal, said the following:

"Today at around 9.30 a.m., a unit of our 'Brigade of Immortals' carried out a sacrificial action in front of the Turkish Ministry of Interior. This action was explicitly planned for the opening of the parliament and in relative proximity to the building, which is considered a massacre and torture centre. It was carried out according to plan and without any obstacles. Our comrades who implemented this sacrificial action overcame the guard post and penetrated inside the security area. They were successful and achieved their goal.

However, as usual, the fascist AKP/MHP regime has chosen this time to brazenly deny its losses suffered in this action and to disregard the people and public opinion. Every person should know that the members of the Brigade of Immortals could have achieved a very different result with only a small change in their timing if they had wanted to. However, such a decision was deliberately not taken and the main objective - to send the necessary message to the concerned bodies and to warn them seriously - was maintained.

This action is an act of legitimate defence against the disregard of human rights that are being trampled on against national and international laws; against the inhuman practice and policy of isolation that is being implemented in all the jails of Turkey and Kurdistan; against the use of chemical weapons against our guerrilla forces despite the universal validity of the Chemical Weapons Convention; against the plunder of our nature and the ecocide in Kurdistan; against the oppression of the Kurdish people and all democratic circles. If the AKP/MHP regime does not stop its genocidal and fascist-motivated crimes, legitimate actions in the sense of revolutionary justice will continue.

This meaningful act of heroism, which was carried out on the day when MPs met in parliament for the first time after the summer recess, was dedicated to the memory of Axîn Mûş (Hülya Demirer), commander of Amed province and once commander of the Brigade of Immortals, and the comrades who fell alongside her. This great and historic action was carried out by our friends Rojhat Zilan and Erdal Şahin. We commemorate these immortal Apoists in the tradition of self-sacrifice, to whom our respect is due, with respect and gratitude, congratulate them and all other companions who contributed to this action and wish them continued success. More information on the identity of the brave sacrificial of the Brigade of Immortals will be shared with the public at a later date."

## Seven soldiers killed in guerrilla actions in Zap

ANF | BEHDINAN | 1 OCTOBER 2023

YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) and HPG (People's Defence Forces) continue the resistance against the Turkish invading forces in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

According to the HPG Press Center statement on Sunday, seven members of the Turkish occupation forces were killed in the latest actions of the guerrillas on the western front of Şehîd Delîl. In the Girê Cûdî resistance area, guerrilla snipers targeted the enemy military forces. In the nearby Girê Amêdîyê resistance area, a Turkish attack on guerrilla positions was repelled from close range with light small arms fire. In another action, guerrillas of YJA Star hit an enemy position with heavy weapons. Guerrillas also carried out three successive sabotage actions in the same area.

In the Sîda area, which is also located in Zap, guerrillas carried out actions against Turkish troops today. At 03:00 last night, guerrillas hit the soldiers with rifles. At 08:00, guerrillas carried out a sabotage action against the occupiers gathered in front of the guerrilla positions.

In the Metîna region, the guerrillas targeted a group of soldiers who set fire to unknown plastic material in order to channel the toxic smoke into the Girê Çarçel tunnel system on 29 September.

HPG also reported that the Turkish army has been increasingly using prohibited weapons to achieve results in its war against the guerrillas. At Girê Çarçel, Turkish forces carried out three attacks with chemical agents on 29 September. The area was also bombed by a drone loaded with explosives. The Girê Amêdîyê resistance area in Zap was targeted five times by drones on 30 September. Nine other attacks with unspecified prohibited ordnance were carried out against the war tunnels in this area on the same day.

In addition, Turkish warplanes carried out seven strikes on the areas of Zap River, Ava Lolanê in Xakurkê, Kanîsarkê in Gare, Girê Çarçel in Metîna, Girê Bahar in Şehîd Delîl in western Zap. The regions of Zap, Şehîd Delîl western Zap, Xakurkê and Metîna were targeted by artillery attacks.

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## Femicide

### Socialist youth activist Berfin Polat imprisoned in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 24 SEPTEMBER 2023

Berfin Polat, a board member of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations, has been imprisoned once again. On Friday, she went to an Istanbul court on a summons, where she was arrested and brought be-

fore a magistrate. The arrest warrant was based on the charge of “membership of a terrorist organisation” - a systematic and arbitrary accusation against opposition activists in Turkey.

Berfin Polat is a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF) and of the Central Coordination of the ÖGK (Free Young Woman). In the parliamentary elections on 14 May, she stood for an MP mandate on the list of the Green Left Party. This is not the first time the young activist has been in prison. In November 2021, at the age of 18, she was jailed in Bakirköy women's prison, accused of terrorism for posts on digital media. A few months earlier, she had her arm broken during a police attack on a commemoration ceremony for the victims of the ISIS attack of 20 July 2015 in Suruç district of Urfa.

Commenting on Berfin Polat's arrest on X, the SGDF said: “They don't want the revolutionary struggle to meet the masses of youth. Revolutionary people are meant to be incapacitated. However, the repression and every attack will only lead to even greater determination.”

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## Kurdish female activist abducted by Iranian forces

ANF | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Community of Free Women in East Kurdistan (Kemelgeha Jinên Azad a Rojhelatê Kurdistan, KJAR) announced that one of their members, Werîşe Muradî (Ciwana Sine), had been kidnapped by Iranian state forces.

According to the KJAR statement released on Tuesday, the Kurdish activist was conducting political organization work in Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan) and was kidnapped near the city of Sine (Sanandaj) on 10 July, 2023. Her aftermath remains unknown since.

KJAR stated that the family of Werîşe Muradî had been engaged in repeated efforts and initiatives after her abduction but could receive no information about their daughter or her aftermath. The uncertainty surrounding the incident increases the concerns of the family and the organization.

“Werîşe Muradî was abducted by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence (Itlaat) and the Guard Corps, which makes the Islamic Republic of Iran responsible for the life of our friend,” KJAR said.

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## Armenian Women's Union in North-East Syria remembers Anush Apetyan

ANF | HESEKE | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

While the world is once again turning a blind eye to what is happening in Armenia's Nagorno-Karabakh (Republic of Artsakh), the Women's Union of the Social Council of Armenians in the Autonomous Region of Northern and Eastern Syria recalled the murder of Anush Apetyan, another war crime committed by Azerbaijan against the Armenian population, which went largely unnoticed by the public and has remained without consequences until today.

Armenian soldier Anush Apetyan was captured, raped, tortured and killed by Azerbaijani military forces in September 2022 during a period of ceasefire near Jermuk in the southern Armenian province of Vayots Dzor. Her torturers mutilated her body, put two severed fingers in her mouth and gouged out her eyes, which they replaced with stones. Apetyan's arms and legs were also cut off. On her chest, her killers wrote hate messages against the Armenian people. They filmed the act of violence in detail and distributed the video via Telegram.

Anush Apetyan was 36 years old and left behind three children aged 16, 15 and 4 when she was murdered "in a barbaric way", said Losnak Kafuryan, chairperson of the Armenian Women's Committee in AANES. "We strongly condemn this bestial crime against an Armenian woman. It is very painful what happened to Anush Apetyan, which abruptly evoked the national trauma of 1915, when 1.5 Armenians and members of other Christian peoples became victims of a Young Turk genocide. The fate of Anush Apetyan was repeated thousands of times."

But even now, Armenians must fear genocide-motivated crimes, Kafuryan stressed. The humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh is already catastrophic due to an internationally tolerated blockade of the Lachin Corridor - the only road connection between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia - which Azerbaijan has maintained for months; food, medicine and petrol are scarce. Then, last Tuesday, authoritarian-led Azerbaijan launched what it described as an "anti-terrorist operation" to occupy the region. Only one day later, the defeated republic had to surrender.

According to Armenian sources, more than 200 people died during the attacks and more than 400 others were injured. The tens of thousands of Armenian civilians now fear being displaced or oppressed by the new Azerbaijani rulers. Thousands of people have already arrived in Armenia. "History seems to be repeating itself. And the whole world is silent again," said Losnak Kafuryan.

## Kurdish politician Selma Irmak sentenced to four years in prison

ANF | AMED | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

Kurdish politician Selma Irmak was sentenced in absentia in Amed (tr. Diyarbakir) to more than four years in prison. The former HDP MP, who is living in exile in Germany due to political persecution, was charged for a TV appearance in 2015, when Selma Irmak spoke out about brutal crimes committed by the Turkish state, including the execution of the actor and activist Hacı Lokman Birlik, whose body was dragged through Şirnak by an armoured car, and the display of the naked body of Ekin Wan, a fallen guerilla fighter, by soldiers of the Turkish army.

Selma Irmak's lawyer Raci Bilici argued in court that his client's remarks fell within the scope of freedom of expression and demanded acquittal. The court sentenced the politician to one year and three months imprisonment for disparaging the government and two years and eleven months for insulting the president.

Selma Irmak has spent many years in prison in Turkey and is a defendant in several criminal cases, including the so-called Kobanê trial against the former HDP executives. In 2016, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that the arrest of Irmak and twelve other former HDP MPs was politically motivated and a violation of Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).



## One more Yazidi woman rescued from ISIS mercenaries

ANF | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Hüseyin Faidi, director of ISIS Rescue Office, reported that one more woman was rescued from ISIS mercenaries.

A total of 3,574 people have been rescued so far. Faidi said that the attempts to save more women still in the hands of ISIS mercenaries continue, and added that he hoped that these attempts are successful so that he will be able to soon share information about those other women.

Faidi said in a statement to the press that a Yazidi woman named A.D., who had been in the hands of ISIS mercenaries for more than 9 years, was rescued.

He added that she was 23 years old and that she had been kidnapped from Shengal when she was 14 years old.



Without giving information about the region from which the Yazidi woman was rescued, Faidi continued: “There are 4-5 more women waiting to be rescued in the same region where that young Yazidi woman was rescued. When we liberate them, we will share their names and the region they were kept with the public.”

Faidi said that the Iraqi government has not provided them with any help to save the women and added that they should collaborate to ensure that more women are liberated and reunited with their families.



## For women activists abducted in Seqiz

ANF | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Four activists have apparently been abducted by Iranian regime forces in East Kurdistan. The France-based Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) reported that the incident occurred on Wednesday at the entrance to the city of Seqiz (Saqqez). The circumstances of the arrests and the women's current whereabouts remain unclear.

According to KHRN information, the arrested activists are Sheyda Rezaei, Shirin Khayyat, Simin Khayyat and Solmaz Hassanzadeh. The latter is the sister of protester Mohammad Hassanzadeh, who was shot dead by Iranian security forces in Bokeran last November during anti-regime protests following the state femicide of Jina Mahsa Amini.

According to KHRN, the four women were arrested without a prior court order. On the same day, Solmaz Hassanzadeh's parents' house in Bokeran was said to have been raided and searched by regime troops. As the human rights organization also announced, the 29-year-old was briefly taken into custody in Bokeran at the beginning of September. At that time, she was arrested as part of a summons from the Ministry of Intelligence. The authorities arrested the 56-year-old father, Ahmad Hassanzadeh.

### Background

The death in custody of the young Kurdish woman Jina Mahsa Amini a year ago triggered the “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” uprising, which spread across the entire country from her hometown of Seqiz. Thousands took to the streets and called for the fall of the mullahs' authoritarian regime. Amini was killed in the custody of the Iranian morality police because she was said to have worn her clothing improperly.

According to civil society organizations, more than 550 demonstrators were killed, thousands injured, around 25,000 arrested and at least seven executed by regime forces. The hunt for members of the revolt continues more than a year after the uprising broke out. Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan) is particularly affected by state repression. People are arrested every day, and some disappear without a trace after being arrested.



## Saturday Mothers violently attacked and detained by the police

ANF | ISTANBUL | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Turkish police have again attacked the Saturday Mothers at Galatasaray Square in Istanbul. The initiative wanted to make a statement for the 966th time on "disappearances" in state custody and demand punishment for the perpetrators on İstiklal Avenue.

For the past 26 weeks, the Saturday Mothers have been prevented by the police citing the decision of the Beyoğlu District Governor's Office as the reason for the ban and mass detention of human rights defenders during the action every Saturday.

Despite a contrary ruling by the Turkish Constitutional Court, the blockade of their ancestral rally site was not lifted today either. The Galatasaray Square on the central İstiklal Avenue was widely cordoned off by barriers and grids in the early morning, with patrol cars and prisoner transport vehicles parked in the side streets. Riot police were deployed with a large contingent to prevent the group from approaching the square, also blocking all the side-streets leading to the square.

On their way to Galatasaray Square, the Saturday Mothers were accompanied by human rights defenders, as well as the Human Rights Association (IHD) President Eren Keskin, Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Party Assembly Member Musa Piroğlu and the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP) MP Ahmet Şık.

The Saturday Mothers and human rights advocates were besieged by the police after starting to march to the square in two groups. A number of people were battered, handcuffed and detained during the crackdown, including IHD President Eren Keskin.

The journalists covering the demonstration were battered and pushed back from the scene.

### Background

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, ruled the Turkish Constitutional Court 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 Constitution, 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 Saturday Mothers.

# Human Rights Violations

## Families say they want justice for Ebrar Site where 1,400 people died in 6 February earthquake

ANF | MARAS | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

A press conference was held at the site where Ebrar Site was located. Some 1,400 people lost their lives in that site when the Maraş earthquake stroke Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria on 6 February. Representatives of political parties and many democratic organizations attended the press conference promoted by the Ebrar Site Families. The families carried the photos of those killed and said: “You cannot build a museum on our pain. We want justice, not a museum.”

### ‘We will be here every month’

Families reacted to the plan to turn the area into a museum and said: “This was an eggplant and lettuce garden. Why was it opened to development and multi-storey buildings were built? The contractor who built this place, Tevfik Tepebaşı, is still alive and has not been arrested.”

The families, who demand that the people who gave the planning permission be prosecuted, said that they will come together every month and make a statement until those responsible are held accountable.

The report prepared by AFAD for Maraş in 2020, drew attention to the ground liquefaction in the region where the Ebrar Site, consisting of 22 blocks, is located and stated that the buildings would collapse in the event of an earthquake because they were too weak. In the earthquake that occurred 3 years after the report, on 6 February 2023, many apartment buildings in the Ebrar Site collapsed and nearly 1,400 citizens lost their lives.

In the expert report examining the cause of the collapse of the blocks in Ebrar Site, no critical findings were made due to the rapid removal of the debris. The report stated that it was not possible to determine whether the columns and carrier systems were cut.

## Seyit Evran, long-time journalist for ANF, passes away in North-East Syria

ANF | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

Seyit Evran, a long-time journalist for ANF, died of a heart attack in North-East Syria on 22 September.

“A journalist, a writer and a revolutionary comrade, Seyit Evran, who had been suffering from heart disease for a long time, lost his life while receiving treatment in a hospital in North-East Syria on 22 September,” said a statement by the Free Press Union Birliđi (Yekitiya Ragihandina Azad-YRA) on Monday.

In a last message before his death, Evran wrote the following:

“On the final journey!

It requires great struggles to attribute a meaning to every moment of life. I also put up great struggles for the sake of this meaning. I am Kurdish and my people was supposed to be free. To this end, I used my pen and my camera, and said my words until my last breath. As I look back and see now, how many generations have changed... What I know is that we have grown more and more every day...

We come from the tradition of those who are based on the philosophy of doing their part for the freedom of this people, even in the grave. That’s indeed what we have existed and lived for.

My grandfather started this struggle while marching with Sheikh Said. I am a grandson of his, and I raised the flag I took over from him with Leader Apo (Abdullah Öcalan) and the PKK. From Amed to Garzan, from Afrin to Qamishlo, from Zap to Sulaymaniyah, from Urmia to Mahabad, I have been everywhere. Now, a part of mine became Bakur, a part of mine became Rojava, a part of mine became Bashur, and a part of mine became Rojhilat. I became Kurdistan altogether. Now, I have millions behind me who will keep this tradition going...

There was still a lot to do, but it seems that time has run out.

Goodbye, with love!”

— ★ —

## Seyit Evran, the memory of the Free Press

ANF | QAMISHLO | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

Kurdish journalist and author Seyit Evran died on 22 September at the age of 54 in a hospital in North-East Syria as a result of heart disease.

In a press statement in front of the Mihemed Şêxo Culture and Art Center in Qamishlo on Monday, the Free Media Association (YRA) said the following:

“With Seyit Evran, we have lost the memory of the free press. For thirty years he was a tireless militant on this honourable and invaluable path. His passion for enlightening societies and his determination to fight enabled him to overcome all obstacles and difficulties. With his attitude, his actions and his pen, he took a firm place in the pages of the free press.

Seyit Evran had a great influence on journalism in the tradition of the free Kurdish press. Born in 1969 in the Hênê district of Amed (Diyarbakır), his rebellious spirit was formed in his parental home, which had been shaped by the resistance of Şêx Seîd. Evran's grandfather was a comrade-in-arms of the leader of the uprising. He encountered the Kurdish liberation movement as a youth. As a student at Çukurova University in Adana, he met Gurbetelli Ersöz (a guerrilla fighter, who died in the “Southern War” in 1997, was instrumental in building up the Kurdish press and became the first woman editor-in-chief in Turkey at the newspaper Özgür Gündem).

### **The years when people were afraid to read newspapers**

Deeply impressed by the press work under the vanguard of Gurbetelli Ersöz, Seyit Evran joined the Kurdish liberation movement in Amed in 1990. He became active in journalism at a time when the Turkish state's attacks on the people of Kurdistan were at their most extreme, Kurdish media workers were being extra-legally executed in the middle of the street and the scorched earth policy was at its height. When the three editorial offices of the newspaper “Özgür Ülke” were bombed in Istanbul, Ankara and Amed on 3 December 1994, Seyit Evran was among the 23 people injured.

Those were the years when many people in Kurdistan and Turkey were afraid to read newspapers. Seyit Evran felt no fear. His love for truth and freedom was stronger, so that in his reporting on massacres and other crimes against the Kurdish people, he also risked his own death again and again. He went to the mountains to write about the reality of the liberation struggle. Following in the footsteps of pioneers like Gurbetelli Ersöz, he spent years researching the life and struggle of the guerrillas and communicating it to the Kurdish people and the world. He wrote countless articles on scientific, historical and literary topics and made important contributions to the Free Press Archive. He later traced this path for his book “Journey to the Edge of Life”.

### **One of the pillars of the Rojava revolution**

Seyit Evran worked for ANF for years. He was not only active as a journalist in Kurdistan, but also in other countries. In Armenia and Russia, for example, he researched the situation of the Kurdish communities there and well-known personalities in those regions. He turned his attention to practically every place with Kurds where there was revolutionary activity. In 2012, when Rojava was gripped by revolution, he went there. On the one hand, he wrote about the reality of the uprising in Rojava. On the other hand, he played a leading role in building the press structures. From Dêrik to Afrin, he travelled throughout the region, following the revolutionary process and training dozens of journalists at the same time. With this work, he became one of the pillars of the Rojava revolution and the revolution of the press.

Seyit Evran had been struggling with health problems since 2020. He suffered two heart attacks and had to undergo several operations. Nevertheless, he continued his work with unbroken enthusiasm and morale. Recently, however, he suffered a relapse that took a toll on his body. Since then, he has been in hospital.

Unfortunately, despite all his efforts, his heart stopped on the morning of 22 September. Seyit Evran, just like Apê Musa, Gurbetelli Ersöz, Halil Dağ, Nûjiyan Erhan, Deniz Fırat, Dilîşan Îbîş and dozens of other free press fighters, was a torch that lit our way for truth and freedom. He has left a great legacy with his work. We, the successors of this tradition, promise to extend and expand this struggle and this truth. Their path will always enlighten us and lift our consciousness.”

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## Atılım newspaper employee Gözütok sent to prison

ANF | ISTANBUL | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

Eray Gözütok, an employee of Atılım newspaper, was taken into custody by the police while he was distributing newspapers in the Gazi District of Istanbul’s Sultangazi district.

Gözütok, who was taken to Vatan Police Department in Fatih, was referred to Çağlayan Courthouse after giving his statement.

Gözütok, whose statement was taken by the prosecutor’s office, was remanded in custody and sent to Silivri Prison on the grounds of “making propaganda for an organization”.

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## Police prevent condolences act for journalist Seyit Evran in Amed

ANF | AMED | 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

Journalist Seyit Evran died as a result of a heart attack in a Northern and Eastern Syria hospital where he was treated, on 22 September.

Evran’s family wanted to hold a 3-day condolence act at the Central Condolence House in Hênê (Hani) district of Amed. However, the police took the keys of the condolence house and did not allow the family to hold their act.

Family members were called to the police and told that they would be allowed to use the condolence house.

The family then started to accept condolences in front of their house in Amed.



## Trendyol warehouse workers taken into custody

ANF | ISTANBUL | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

Trendyol Esenyurt warehouse workers, who were dismissed without compensation under Code 46 because they were unionized and could not find an interlocutor for 30 days, carried their resistance under the leadership of PTT-Sen and DGD-Sen in front of Trendyol General Directorate.

The police, who blockaded the front and surroundings of the directorate before the protest, tried to prevent the workers from making the statement. Despite all the obstacles, the workers managed to speak and call the Minister of Labor and Social Security to duty.

The action of Trendyol warehouse workers was supported by Green Left Party MP Kezban Konukçu, former HDP MP Musa Piroğlu, Nakliyat-İş chair Ali Rıza Küçükosmanoğlu, as well as many trade unions, political parties and democratic mass organizations.

### **‘The law is not applied to bosses who steal our rights’**

The workers explained the unlawfulness they experienced. Emre Özdek called for solidarity, emphasizing that they were reclaiming their rights. Özdek said: “Here we are portrayed as if we are usurpers and we are struggling to get something that we do not have the right to, rather than our rights. The bosses know how to hide behind the law and confront us with such a police army when it suits them. Because, of course, the law does not apply to bosses who steal our rights.”

### **‘I ask you, who is guilty now?’**

18-year-old Muhammet Cengiz, another worker in the resistance, said: “Union is a right, dismissal is a crime. Denial of union rights is a crime. But when we try to defend these rights, we are beaten and detained. I’m asking you who is guilty now?”

DGD-Sen chair Neslihan Acar said: “We are resisting for our rights. Rights that we have earned by paying a heavy price.”

Acar added: “If Trendyol wins the resistance, young people will win.”

PTT-Sen chair Süleyman Şen underlined that the direct addressees of this problem are the Minister of Labor and Social Security and the Minister of Justice and said: “Ministers, why don’t you send inspectors? Don’t you want to scare away capital coming from China? You say union is a constitutional right. Where are you?”

Green Left Party MP Kezban Konukçu said that the party stands by all workers who resist and added: “Their resistance is our resistance. We will make your resistance known. We will make your voice heard. We support you.”

### ‘Solidarity is our only power’

Former HDP MP Musa Piroğlu said: “Everyone should hear and know that the voice of 14 workers here is the voice of millions. Their demand is the demand of the worker who is pushed into weakness and misery. The local and national governments are offering the blood and labor of the workers to the international capital. Solidarity is our only strength. We can stop this attack by solidarity. We have no choice but to support each other, we will win together.”

### 12 workers taken into custody

The police attacked the trade unionists and workers who wanted to meet with Trendyol representatives. While 12 workers, including the chairs of PTT-Sen and DGD-Sen, were violently taken into custody, journalists who tried to film were beaten by the police and forcibly removed from the area.



## Villagers block road to protest closure of land by chief village guard

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

People have not been able to enter the village of Zivingê Şikaka, located in the Gabar Mountain region of Şirnak’s Basa (Güçlükonak) district, for ten days. Chief village guard M. Ö. prevents the villagers from entering the land, which is owned by thirty households. He also rents the land with the knowledge of the gendarmerie, and cuts and sells the trees in the forest land.

### Road closed

The villagers, who had been waiting at the entrance of the village for ten days, protested and closed the road leading to the village on Tuesday.

When the villagers protested and closed the Güçlükonak-Siirt road to traffic, long convoys of trucks were formed.

The villagers, who were harassed by the gendarmerie, wanted to place the containers they brought with them on their land to reclaim their rights over the land.

The villagers said that although they complained about the chief village guard, no intervention was made by the gendarmerie.



The villagers, who wanted the tree cutting to be stopped, added that they would not open the road to traffic until their demands were met.

The road was reopened to traffic after the intervention of the gendarmerie.



## Police take 12 people into custody in Mersin

ANF | MERSIN | 27 SEPTEMBER 2023

Within the scope of a new police political operation ordered by the Mersin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on the grounds of "making propaganda for a terrorist organisation", many houses were raided simultaneously in the morning hours. 12 people were taken into custody during the raids.

Those detained were taken to the Provincial Police Department.



## Raqqa Civil Council moves refugees in regular camps

ANF | RAQQA | 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

According to the decision taken by the Raqqa Civil Council and the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria, refugees were housed in 4 camps in the Raqqa countryside. Refugees are sent to Ednaniyê, Selhebiye Şerqiye, Reşîd and Rehiyat camps.

Raqqa Civil Council and Autonomous Administration took this decision after closely following the problems and suffering of refugees who had settled in 53 irregular camps. Most of the camps were located near garbage dumps, and some were located near cemeteries. There was no sewage network or drinking water in those camps. Additionally, children didn't receive education due to the lack of educational centers in the irregular camps.

Due to the lack of health services in these camps, many diseases are spreading among refugees, especially affecting children. The Social Affairs Committee confirmed that refugees will be placed in regular camps so that they can receive better healthcare.

Speaking to ANHA, Raqqa Civil Council Social Affairs Committee Office Director Mihemed Bekir said: "First of all, we met with the refugees in the irregular camps and explained the problems. We told them the importance of the transition from these camps to regular camps. The transfer of refugees to the organized camps will not take place immediately, but in several stages. Families will be placed according to the facilities of the camps. Refugees staying in Til Bêa, Herqe, Rebîa, Yarub, Mezyûne, Xeyale and Sehlet El Benat camps will be transferred to Ednaniyê Camp."

Raqqa Civil Council built Ednaniyê Camp at the beginning of this year. 3 thousand families live in the camp, built on an area of 650 decares. The sewerage and drinking water networks of the camp have been prepared.

Bekir said that 300 families from Sehlet El Benat Camp were settled in Ednaniyê Camp in mid-September.

Last month, the Social Affairs Committee transferred 25 families to Ednaniyê Camp, after its infrastructure was completed. These refugees consist of families that were deported by Lebanon and moved to the Autonomous Administration regions.



## A journalist and four HDP politicians sentenced to one and a half years in prison in Bursa

ANF | BURSA | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

An appeal trial against several members of the Kurdish democratic opposition ended at a criminal court in the western Turkish province of Bursa on Thursday with a verdict of one and a half years' imprisonment each. The defendants were Aynur Yılmaz and Mehmet Akbaş, the former co-chairs of the provincial association of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Bursa, Halis Şanlı responsible for the Mudanya district, and the HDP activist İsmail Hakkı Gökçe. Journalist Emrah Çaçan was the fifth defendant to appear in court.

The basis for the indictment against her was the accusation of having carried out “propaganda for a terrorist organization” through posts on social media. The proceedings go back to investigations from 2015. In the case of Çaçan, the “offense of terrorist propaganda” was far more serious because she published the articles incriminated by the prosecution as a correspondent for the DIHA news agency, which was banned by state decree in 2016. Çaçan was in custody for the trial from January to September 2016.

In a first trial in January 2021, all five defendants were acquitted of the charge of terrorist propaganda, although two co-defendants received prison sentences of three years and eighteen months respectively. Because the public prosecutor wanted to see all defendants convicted, they appealed. The proceedings against those now convicted were reopened. The new trial began last June. The defense lawyers announced that they will appeal the verdict.

### Arrests in Mersin

Ten Kurds were arrested in Mersin on Wednesday. The reason given for the arrests was an investigation by the Mersin Public Prosecutor's Office into allegations of terrorist propaganda. Among those detained was İsa Kurt, chair of a cultural association in Mersin made up of people from Hakkari province. Kurt was arrested along with eleven other people in early morning raids. A court imposed police reporting requirements on two of them instead of pre-trial detention.



## AKP builds dwellings for 15,000 Meskhetian Turks in Ahlat, Bitlis

ANF | BITLIS | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

Possessed by the fear of an increase in its Kurdish population, the Turkish state is employing various methods to change the demographic structure in the Kurdish region, in the south-eastern part of the country.

The city of Bitlis, which is among the main targets of the Turkish state in this sense, is seeing yet another plan implemented by the government.

The Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKİ) has built 500 houses in the Ahlat district of Bitlis in the past year, and settled thousands of Turkish migrants in this settlement.

In the Ahlat district of Bitlis, the AKP-MHP government built 200 houses and settled 2,500 Meskhetian Turks in 2022. Another 300 houses are being constructed in the district this year with the intention of having another 3,000 Meskhetian Turks settled there. A total of 5,500 foreigners will have been moved to the district by the end of the year.

Not contented with that, the AKP government will build a thousand more houses in Ahlat. The construction will start this year and nearly 15,000 people will be settled here.

Three thousand Meskhetian Turks brought in from Ukraine were settled in Ahlat and the district of Üzümlü in Erzincan in 2016 and 2017.

Between 2015 and 2023, the AKP government settled over 25 thousand foreign-national Turkish migrants in Ahlat. The expenses of all the settlements built for them are covered by the government itself.

A large number of migrants had been settled in various parts of Northern Kurdistan before, including the Adilcevaz district of Bitlis, Erciş and Özalp districts of Van and Tutak district of Ağrı.



## Employee of Yeni Yaşam daily detained in Dersim

ANF | DERSİM | 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

Azime Bozkurt, an employee of the Yeni Yaşam newspaper, was taken into custody in Dersim. According to the Human Rights Association (IHD), the detention of Bozkurt took place with the use of violence and in a completely arbitrary manner. There was no order for the detention, the organisation said.

Several members of the IHD and Ayten Kordu, a member of the parliament for the Green Left Party, happened to witness Bozkurt being detained by the police in the centre of Dersim on Friday. Kordu intervened and tried to prevent the arrest of the newspaper worker. In the end, however, she was unable to prevent her from being forcibly dragged into an emergency vehicle and taken to the police station.

According to the IHD, the police also confiscated all the issues of the newspaper that Bozkurt was carrying. The newspaper is published legally by the Arinna publishing house in Istanbul. Because it publishes in the tradition of the free Kurdish press and is a successor to “Özgür Gündem”, “Yeni Yaşam” is the permanent focus of the Turkish repressive authorities. Its staff is also affected by the arbitrary persecution.



## Investigation against Green Left Party MP Ömer Öcalan

ANF | ANKARA | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation against Green Left Party Urfa MP Ömer Öcalan. The justification for the investigation was a speech the MP made at a meeting organized on Thursday by the Green Left Party, the Free Women's Movement (TJA), the Marmara Assistance and Solidarity Association with the Families of Detainees and Convicts (MATUHAY-DER), and the Anatolian Association for Assistance and Solidarity with the Families of the Lost Relatives (ANYAKAY-DER).

The Chief Public Prosecutor's Office said in a statement that an investigation was launched into Ömer Öcalan's words regarding the isolation imposed on Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan. The MP said: "We are struggling for the release of Abdullah Öcalan, our struggle will continue until Mr. Öcalan and Kurdistan are free."



## Initiative in Austria calls for international protection for Kurds

ANF | VIENNA | 1 OCTOBER 2023

In many cases, Kurds and opposition members from Turkey are not granted asylum status in Austria. A citizens' initiative has launched a petition against this and submitted it to the National Council on 20 September. The petition will be discussed in the committee on 5 October. A decision is expected in December. The campaign “Political asylum is a human right - Turkey is not a safe country of origin” is supported by many celebrities.

The petition said: “According to the Geneva Refugee Convention, people who are persecuted for reasons of their political beliefs or ethnic identity must be granted asylum. However, we are concerned that in many cases, Kurds and opposition members from Turkey are currently not being granted the international protection they require in Austria.

If they return, they risk torture, imprisonment and inhumane and degrading treatment. The lack of rule of law in connection with horrendous human rights violations is regularly identified by international organizations and is internationally known. Nevertheless, the Austrian asylum authorities regularly do not deal with this sufficiently and, as a result, do not recognize any asylum-relevant persecution in the measures taken by the Turkish authorities.”

The petition added: “Through our citizens' initiative, we want to show to what extent the citizens of Austria cannot understand these decisions because there is a lack of fact-based basis.

We demand international protection and, as a result, an immediate stop to deportations for affected people in Austria as well as an immediate reassessment of Turkey as a country of origin, taking serious account of the current political and humanitarian situation on site, especially in the Kurdish regions and for Kurdish activists. Austria must not become a sidekick of Erdogan's assimilation and war policy against Kurds in general and political activists in particular.”

### **Support from politics and culture**

Among the first signatories of the petition were many well-known people from Austria's political and cultural landscape. The head of the SPÖ delegation in the EU Parliament, Andreas Schieder, expressed great concern for the dangerous developments regarding democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms in Turkey and said: “The Kurds in particular are severely affected by Erdogan's policies, as fundamental freedom and human rights are not respected but rather undermined. The situation on the ground, particularly in the Kurdish areas and for the Kurdish people, is dangerous. I am therefore of the opinion that there must be an immediate stop to deportations from Austria to Turkey for the affected Kurds in Austria. A reassessment of Turkey as a safe country of origin is also urgently needed.”

Berivan Aslan, member of the Green Party in the Vienna State Parliament, said: “People who have dedicated their lives to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in order to leave a life of dignity to future generations have not fled for nothing and become the target of anti-democratic minds. With this inhumane deportation practice, they accept and legitimize the inhumane policies of the Erdogan government!”

### **“Austria must adhere to the Geneva Refugee Convention”**

Journalist and writer Susanne Scholl said that it was “inhumane to send people back to where they were and are being persecuted. Austria has a dark history that particularly obliges us to preserve and protect human rights. Deportations contradict human rights!”

SPÖ National Council member Katharina Kucharowits said: “Kurds and opposition members are threatened with arrest and torture in Turkey. Protecting people from this is our responsibility. I therefore support the call for a stop to deportations to Turkey and the renewed examination of whether Turkey is a safe country of origin.”

Director Katharina Mückstein also supported the demand to immediately stop deportations of politically persecuted Kurds to Turkey and said: “The Austrian federal government must adhere to the Geneva Refugee Convention and protect the lives and freedom of expression of those affected.”

## Systematic oppression, persecution, political justice and torture

Author Gerhard Ruiss said: “With the exception of the death penalty, everything that makes an authoritarian state can be found in Turkey: systematic oppression of minorities, persecution of deviants, arbitrary arrests, political justice, torture, murders. For those who are affected by this situation, it makes no difference whether the conditions for those persecuted by authoritarian governments are even worse elsewhere. How can such a country, where all this is happening, be a safe country of origin for the opposition activists who have escaped from it?”

## Protecting human rights as a moral responsibility

Journalist, author and activist Berfin Marx said: “Kurds experience significant discrimination and marginalization in the diaspora, and it is our moral responsibility to protect their basic human rights. In Turkey, they face persecution because of their political beliefs or ethnic identity, and according to the Geneva Refugee Convention, they should be granted asylum. We must not allow Kurds in Austria to continue to be at risk of being deported, even when they are politically active in Turkey and are experiencing persecution there. The practice of systematically rejecting applications from Kurdish and other opposition activists must be urgently reconsidered. I call for international refugee protection to be upheld, as enshrined in the constitution. Austria must not become complicit in violating the right to political asylum.”

Writer and historian Doron Rabinovici said: “Being committed to human rights does not just mean respecting them within one’s own territory. For Austria, having signed the UN Convention Against Torture does not just mean not committing torture itself. We are obliged to protest those who in other countries - such as Turkey - use torture to persecute opponents.”

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# Interview

## Besê Erzincan: The enemy will not make young people step back

ANF | 25 SEPTEMBER 2023

Besê Erzincan, coordinating member of the KJK (Community of Kurdistan Women), spoke about the situation of young people in Kurdistan on the Xwebûn program on Jin TV hosted by Arjîn Baysal. Evaluating the Turkish state’s attacks on young people, Erzincan noted that a special war policy had been carried out in Kurdistan in the past, but this has intensified in recent years.

*All revolutions began with young people, with their rebellion. In this sense, what role and importance does youth have in revolutions?*

Of course, youth is one of the groups that suffers most from the system of capitalist modernity. Especially young women. They are oppressed in society. It is assumed that they have no will. Above all, the nation state wants to enslave the youth through work and education. Each side wants to use it for their own interests. The search among young people is very long. When they see society, they realize that they have no say, that they are under pressure, that they are not valued, that their work is not valued, and they start looking. They want to clarify their future; they want to survive in life.

If we look at how many freedom, environmental, democracy and women's movements there are, we see that most of them are led by young people. Young people are at the forefront of protests against the capitalist system. Because young people don't see a future. The situation in Kurdish society is the same. At Newroz it is the young people who come to the fore. In the case of guerrillas, it is the young people who are in the most difficult places who make more sacrifices. When the women's issue comes up, it is the young people who rebel. They lead society in both their courage and their thoughts. When young people see the right idea, they are convinced that they can do anything. This is also the case in our movement. Young people are very active and are creating radical alternatives.

*As the number of active young people in the world increases, the policies of states are also changing. In recent years, many political measures have been taken towards young people. What kind of society does the nation-state want to build based on youth?*

The nation state promotes male and state power the most. A few rich men dominate the entire society. The nation-state system is based on this foundation. That's why the nation state doesn't do all this just through oppression. It begins with education from childhood. It creates a change in mentality. He educates good public servants for himself. This education system creates robots. Young people are taught rules, traditions, history, art, philosophy so that they can serve the nation state well. There is no culture, no freedom, no native language, no real history.

When one nation becomes sovereign, other nations are displaced. This is also the case in Turkey. The young people are, for example, Kurds, Armenians, Alevis, but a system has been created in which everyone speaks the same language. When a young person has no identity, when he has no language, then how can he find his identity and have a personality? The situation is not much different when it comes to young Turkish people. People without a will accept everything.

It's the same in Iran. Let's look at the Syrian system. The Ba'athist regime does the same thing. Especially in the Middle East, the nation-state system means a lack of will for young people. It means that they deny their own culture and mother tongue. Capitalist modernity does not want young people to be free. It encourages drugs and prostitution. The goal of capitalist modernity is to make young people weak-willed and unable to think about freedom, politics, their country and democracy. These young people live according to the nation state, according to personal interests, according to individualism. When these young people grow up, they commit violence against women, their elders and do not accept community life. The system does not want young people to know themselves, to organize themselves, to make decisions for themselves and to work for their country.

In my opinion, the young people are still very good. There is so much pollution, lies, poverty, violence, hierarchy and pressure on them that the youth are revolting even though they barely understand the idea of freedom. We should not blame the young people, there is a system and that system needs to be analysed. There has never been such an attack on youth as in the 21st century. There are major attacks on young people through television, the Internet, technology and education.

In order for capitalist modernity to organize its future and maintain its slave rule, it prevents the youth from becoming conscious and implements its entire policy through women and young people. Young people have never suffered so much. There has always been politics against the youth, but this is the first time such dirty politics has appeared at this level. This is particularly true for young women. Young people are most affected by violence and rape, both girls and boys. Young people are also hit hardest by unemployment. In contrast to this policy, Rêber Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] relies mainly on women and young people. The 21st century is the century of women and youth. If there is to be a breakthrough, it will be based on Rêber Apo's paradigm.

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## Opinion

### Terrorists in Rojava, heroes in Ukraine

ANF | 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

Two British volunteers recently died in Ukraine and were duly commended in the UK for their selfless efforts against the Russian war of aggression. However, the deaths of Dan Burke and Sam Newey also highlight the very different attitude of the British government towards the conflict in Rojava and the political persecution of internationalists supporting the fight against ISIS and the Turkish occupation forces in northern Syria.

Before going to Ukraine, both men had been caught up in a wave of repression targeting British nationals with links to Rojava and explicitly to the YPG (People's Defence Units). Dan Burke spent seven months in custody on terrorism charges - that is, for fighting against ISIS - before the case was abruptly dropped. Sam Newey, then just 19 years old, was charged even though he had no intention of travelling to Syria. According to people who knew him, this repression played a role in his decision to join the Defence of Ukraine.

The legal task force of the British Kurdistan Solidarity Network (KSN) points out that Dan Burke and Sam Newey were willing to risk their lives to defend values that the British government supposedly shares. And yet, KSN says, "both men were subjected to excessive harassment and attack by the British government and security services because of their links to the Kurdish movement in Syria, which is waging a legitimate struggle against occupation and ethnic cleansing in that region".



Dan Burke was a former member of a British Army paratrooper elite regiment and went to Rojava in 2017 after 22 people were killed in an Islamist suicide bombing at the Manchester Arena. There he met Sam Newey's brother Dan and fought against ISIS with the support of Royal Air Force airstrikes. He also reportedly provided intelligence to British intelligence on how to fight ISIS. In March 2019, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), whose backbone is the YPG/YPJ, were able to declare territorial victory over ISIS. Burke, who had already returned to Europe, could have expected a hero's welcome - or at least to be left alone. Instead, he was targeted by British justice.

The background to the criminalisation of internationalists fighting in Rojava was the fact that Turkey itself intervened and occupied large areas of northern Syria after the crushing of the ISIS caliphate. As a result, the international volunteers in the region faced NATO's second largest army. While the UK had long criminalised the Kurdish movement as a whole and frowned on trips by British volunteers to Rojava, this change emboldened the prosecution of internationalists. The then Home Secretary Sajid Javid announced never-implemented plans to automatically treat travel to Rojava as a criminal offence and gave internationalists a one-month ultimatum to leave the region.

Dan Burke and Sam Newey were among half a dozen British volunteers who faced terrorism charges as the UK Crown Prosecution Service tried a range of prosecution strategies that ultimately failed. When Dan Newey returned to Rojava to rejoin the fight against the Turkish occupiers and ISIS, his brother and father were arrested and charged with terrorism financing for sending him £150. Dan Burke was arrested, accused of helping Dan Newey travel and wanting to return to Syria himself. The case was eventually dropped, and Burke was released after seven months in custody. Sam Newey and his father were out on bail for months, lost their jobs and faced police raids at home and at university, which father Paul described as a "nightmare".

No British national has yet been convicted of membership of the YPG/YPJ. The systematic persecution obviously serves to appease the Erdogan regime. Meanwhile, the Kurdish movement continues to face ethnic cleansing at the hands of NATO's second largest army, and its representatives argue for a diplomatic "third way" between the warring powers. However, a number of internationalists who fought in Rojava have travelled privately to Ukraine to defend the country - including Burke and the Newey brothers. Their persecution by the British authorities contributed to this decision.

Sam Newey died on the front line in Ukraine on 31 August. The death of Dan Burke on 11 August remains the subject of a police investigation in which another international volunteer is considered the prime suspect. In its statement on the deaths, KSN's legal department says: "Both men will now be remembered as heroes who lost their lives defending Ukraine. But both were also subjected to state harassment and persecution that prevented them from living normal lives in the UK. The UK's hypocritical support for Turkey's war against the Kurds makes a mockery of the British government's claim to stand up for democracy, self-determination and fundamental rights [in Ukraine]."

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