

THE İMRALI POST

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

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Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

Thousand cards sent to Öcalan from Marseille

ANF | MARSEILLE | 27 JANUARY 2024

A thousand cards were sent to İmralı from Marseille within the scope of the “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan, solution to the Kurdish question” initiative.

Many Kurdish citizens attended the event promoted by Arin Mirkan Women’s Council.

Aysel Bulanık, on behalf of the Assembly, summarized the purpose of the action as follows: “Our Leader has been under severe isolation for a long time. We have not received any news from him for 3 years. This is why the Kurdish people launched an action throughout Europe to demand the physical freedom of our Leader. We will send a thousand cards to our Leader. People expressed their feelings on the cards. From now on, we will continue to fight day and night for the freedom of the Leader. Our leadership waged a great struggle for the recognition of Kurds and Kurdistan. Our duty is to support our Leader. We invite all our people to mobilize to ensure the success of the initiative.”



Castel: Öcalan's rights to defense have been violated for 25 years

ANF | STRASBOURG | 28 JANUARY 2024

Abdullah Öcalan has been held in the prison island of Imrali for 25 years. For three years there has been no communication with the outside world. This extreme example of torture by a Council of Europe member featured in three speeches in the Parliamentary Assembly debate of 24 January 2024 on “Allegations of systemic torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in places of detention in Europe”.

Ezquerra Republicana (Republican Left party from Catalunya) senator Laura Castel said in her speech at the debate that “Öcalan's rights to defense have been violated for 25 years.”

In a report titled ‘Allegations of systemic torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in places of detention in Europe’ the following was said: “As regards the conditions of detention and isolation of Mr Öcalan, raised by NGOs before the Committee of Ministers in the context of the execution of the case of Öcalan (No. 2), the Committee of Ministers has noted that the Court is currently seized of a new application concerning his detention conditions, which are also being monitored by the CPT which holds regular visits to the İmralı Prison. I am particularly worried about the continuing detention of Mr Osman Kavala and Mr Selahattin Demirtaş despite clear judgments of the Court finding violations of the Convention and ordering their release. The Council of Europe should closely monitor their cases, including any possible risks of ill-treatment they might face while in detention.”



New group takes over the ‘Freedom for Öcalan’ Vigil in Strasbourg

ANF | STRASBOURG | 31 JANUARY 2024

The Freedom for Öcalan Vigil launched by the Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Initiative on 25 June 2012 in Strasbourg, to demand freedom of the Kurdish People's Leader and an end to the isolation imposed on him, continues with a new group of activists.

The vigil is taking place in front of the CPT because the committee has a central function in controlling prison conditions on Imrali and only performs this to a very limited extent. For almost three years there has been no sign of life from Öcalan, who has been imprisoned in Imrali since 1999.

Engin Sezen, Hasan Kartal and Yusuf Erdem, three patriots from the Bordeaux region of France, took over the vigil in its 605th week.

Group spokesperson Engin Sezen stated that they reject isolation and saluted the hunger strikes in prisons and the resistance in Kurdistan and the rest of the world against the isolation of Öcalan.

Sezen called on the Kurdish people to show awareness and take action everywhere they are.

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Long March in France on day 11

ANF | EVRY | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

The Democratic Kurdish Council of France (CDK-F) and the Kurdish Women's Movement in France (TJK-F) launched on 22 January a 25-day-long march for the freedom of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan from Paris to Strasbourg, where the European Union institutions are located. The march is taking place under the slogan "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan, Justice for Kurds" as part of the international [campaign](#) "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan, a Political Solution to the Kurdish Question", which was launched worldwide on 10 October 2023. The march continued on its 11th day through the city of Evry.

During the march, thousands of leaflets were distributed to raise awareness of the people in the neighborhood, while French shopkeepers and institutions in the region were presented with files prepared about the unlawful and absolute isolation of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan.

After a minute of silence in memory of the Kurdistan Revolution Martyrs, Faruk Demir, one of the activists, made a speech and said:

"Dear friends, exactly 25 years ago, Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured by an international conspiracy and handed over to the Turkish state. For exactly 25 years, we have been on the streets and defending our leader. We see that day (February 15, 1999) as a black day in our history. We condemn that day, the invaders and the international conspirators and we stand up for our leader. We are spreading his struggle, ideas and philosophy throughout the world, in Kurdistan and in the Middle East."

The activists sang enthusiastically throughout the march, chanting slogans for Abdullah Öcalan's freedom, while the local people were informed about the conditions of the Kurdish People's Leader's isolation in French through loudspeakers.

Postcards collected during the march were mailed to the island of İmralı, where Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan is being held under intense isolation.

There will be a dengbêj concert at the Kurdish Democratic Community Center in Grigny at 17.00 local time today. Dengbêj singing is the most important part of traditional Kurdish musical culture. This name is given to singers who render poems, epics and historical events of oral Kurdish literature in the form of songs. The word is derived from deng (voice) and bêj (to say, to speak). For the Kurdish people, oral literature is regarded as the autobiography of society, which is why dengbêj are also considered historians.

Tomorrow's stage of the march (day 12) will take place in the suburb of Villeneuve Saint Georges, south of Paris. There will also be a movie screening.

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Prisons in Turkey

ill prisoner on Human Rights Association's list released after 30 years

ANF | 27 JANUARY 2024

The application made by the lawyers of Mutlak Tozun, a seriously ill prisoner who stayed in jail for 30 years, was accepted. The Akhisar Criminal Execution Judgeship accepted the application filed because of the health problems experienced by Tozun and ordered his release.

Mutlak Tozun is on the list of ill prisoners compiled by the Human Rights Association (IHD).

On the morning of 18 December, Tozun was taken to Akhisar State Hospital after fainting in the ward. Tozun was treated at the hospital for three days, and as a result of the examinations, a mass was detected in his body.

Tozun was transferred to Izmir Training and Research Hospital, better equipped to treat him. However, he was taken back to prison on the grounds that the transfer date was changed to 18 January.

Advanced stomach cancer was detected in the examinations performed on Tozun at Izmir Ataturk Training and Research Hospital.

While Tozun's treatment in the hospital was continuing, his lawyers Nehir Bilece, Eylem Zengin and Ali Ihsan Güven applied to the Akhisar Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on 24 January.

Akhisar Criminal Execution Judgeship, which evaluated the application for "suspension of the sentence" or "postponement", released Tozun under judicial control.

Tozun's treatment continues in the Gastroenterology department of Izmir Ataturk Training and Research Hospital.

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Hunger strike in prisons enters day 65

ANF | 30 JANUARY 2024

The rotating hunger strike action launched in prisons to demand the physical freedom of Leader Öcalan, who is kept in isolation in Imralı Prison, continues on the 65th day.

The action, which was launched on 27 November by PKK and PAJK prisoners in order to participate in the “Freedom for Leader Öcalan, solution to the Kurdish question” initiative that began on 10 October, will continue until 15 February 2024.

27 November is the date of the PKK's 'founding congress' held in the village of Fîs in Licê, in the province of Amed, in 1978. 15 February, on the other hand, is the day of the capture of Öcalan in Kenya in 1999, as a result of an international conspiracy.

Öcalan has been subjected to isolation policies in Imralı, where he has been held for 25 years. He has not been allowed to meet with his family and lawyers for almost three years.

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Mothers take Justice Vigil in front of Parliament

ANF | ANKARA | 31 JANUARY 2024

Relatives of prisoners and Peace Mothers, who are holding a Justice Vigil in many cities to demand the physical freedom of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan, held a press conference at the door of the Parliament. People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) Parliamentary group deputy chair Gülistan Kılıç Koçyiğit and DEM Party Women's Assembly spokesperson, Halide Türkoğlu attended the action.

Halide Türkoğlu said that the mothers went in front of the parliament to meet with the Minister of Justice, but they were informed that the Minister was not there. Türkoğlu said that they would deliver the file containing the demands of the mothers to the deputy Minister of Justice.

Türkoğlu said: “For the establishment of peace, the mothers demand that the isolation imposed on Mr. Öcalan be lifted and that the demands of political prisoners on hunger strike be met. The whole country should listen to the voices of Peace Mothers who came here from many parts of the country.”

Speaking on behalf of the Peace Mothers, Hamdiye Kırıcı said: “First of all, we salute the Great Freedom March, which will be held between 1-15 February, with the aim of ending the quarter-century isolation imposed on Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan. There has been no news from Mr. Öcalan since 25 March 2021. Allowing visits and providing news will be the only way to a peaceful and democratic life. We once again call on women, all public opinion that wants peace, freedom and democracy, international institutions and organizations to increase the fight against the Imralı torture system.

Hundreds of prisoners in nearly 100 jails in Turkey went on hunger strike on 27 November 2023, demanding the removal of the isolation imposed on Mr. Öcalan and reclaiming his freedom and a democratic and peaceful solution to the Kurdish question.”

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Seriously ill prisoner Karagüzel taken to the hospital

ANF | İZMİR | 31 JANUARY 2024

Seriously ill prisoner Muhlise Karagüzel (61), who is in Menemen R Type Closed Prison, was taken to Izmir Atatürk Training and Research Hospital on 26 January due to her health problems.

Her daughter Zilan Karagüzel said that her mother underwent angiography due to vascular occlusion after she was hospitalized.

Zilan Karagüzel said that the doctors told them that open-heart surgery should be performed.

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ESP goes on solidarity hunger strike: “We are raising our voice”

ANF | İZMİR | 31 JANUARY 2024

Members of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) and PAJK (Party of Free Women in Kurdistan) imprisoned in Turkey went on hunger strike on 27 November in support of the international [campaign](#) “Freedom for Öcalan, A Political Solution to the Kurdish Question”. According to the prisoners’ representative, Deniz Kaya, the hunger strike is carried out in alternating groups and will continue until 15 February, the anniversary of the international conspiracy against Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan.

The Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) Izmir Provincial Organisation started a 3-day hunger strike on Wednesday to support the ongoing hunger strikes in prisons and the Justice Vigil started by prisoners’ relatives.

ESP members started the action by visiting the Justice Vigil organised by the Aegean Association for Assistance with Families of Prisoners and Convicts (EGE TUHAYDER) and the Free Women’s Movement (Tevgera Jinên Azad, TJA) at DBP (Democratic Regions Party) Izmir Provincial Representative Office.

Prisons are “torture centres”

ESP Izmir provincial executive Hızır Ali Kılıç said that R, S and Y type prisons are “torture centres” where the government applies systematic torture. Pointing out that those who want to show solidarity with prisoners are also detained, Kılıç said, “Yesterday morning, our provincial chairman Kerim Altınmakas and

many of our comrades were detained in house raids because they made prison visits. We are raising our voice to increase solidarity with the prisoners, and we will do more than we can.”

We salute the honourable resistance

Pointing out that a special isolation is imposed on Abdullah Öcalan, Kılıç said that despite this, the Kurdish people are expanding their resistance. Referring to the hunger strikes initiated by political prisoners in prisons, Kılıç said, “Prisoners’ families continue their resistance with justice vigils in Kurdistan and metropolises. We salute this honourable resistance with our sincerest feelings. It is your resistance that will lead us to victory. This struggle will continue until the isolation is broken. We are starting a hunger strike here today against the isolation of political prisoners. We also call on all human rights organisations and political parties to enhance this struggle and break this isolation together. Let's not be a partner in crime by remaining silent.”

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Chamber of Architects protests lack of transparency in work on Diyarbakır Prison No. 5

ANF | AMED | 2 FEBRUARY 2024

The Prison Commission of Amed (Diyarbakır) Branch of the Chamber of Architects (MO), affiliated with the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), held a press conference regarding the situation of Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, which the government has decided to turn into a museum. Şerefhan Aydın, a member of the Prison Commission asked the government: “What are you hiding from the city in the Military Prison Building No. 5?”

Chamber of Architects not included in the process

Referring to the process of preparing the Diyarbakır Military Prison No. 5 project, which is the collective memory place of the entire society as well as the Kurdish people, Aydın said: “Many studies have been carried out so far, based on the concern and fact that the Ministry and the architectural office cannot fully reflect this truth to the project. Unfortunately, the pursuit of involvement of both us, the chamber of architects, and different institutions and personalities in the work initiated following the decision to transform Diyarbakır prison, which is the place where such traumatic events and practices took place, into a cultural center and ethnography museum, has not been accepted in any way.”

Work being conducted secretly

Underlining that such projects that appeal to the whole society should not be left in the hands of just one architectural firm, Aydın said: “Such projects should be carried out in a way that is open to contributions from the first stage to the end, so that concerns and doubts do not arise. Unfortunately, until now, all work has been carried out in secret, without giving information to the witnesses of the period, the public, civil society and professional organizations. The Chamber of Architects is a constitutional professional or-

ganization working for the benefit of the public and society. Therefore, it sees itself as responsible for this work, whose subject is the city, space and memory. The public and sensitive people apply to our chamber and ask what is going on in the prison.”

Institutions are committing crimes

Aydın reminded that in order to get answers on all concerns, they applied to the Diyarbakır Surveying Monuments Directorate on 16 August 2023 for permission to examine what was happening inside the prison campus and document its current state. Emphasizing that no response has been given to the application yet, Aydın said: “We, therefore, directly applied to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on 29 September 2023, but we have not yet received any response from the ministry either. These institutions are committing a crime by not responding to our letters.”

Call for sensitivity

Calling on the public for sensitivity, Aydın continued: “Why is the project process not carried out transparently, what is being hidden from whom? Why aren’t we allowed to inspect the area? Are you destroying those remains inside that bear witness to brutal torture? We are concerned about this management approach. We are worried because they burned down the wall and built an artificial history. We are worried because they buried Hasankeyf. We are worried because they are already blowing up Geliyê Godernê with dynamite. We have difficulty predicting what this mentality can do in military prison No. 5, and we are worried. That's why we call on the public to be sensitive to this situation. This is also our call to the relevant institutions. We want them to provide us with the necessary means to investigate the area as soon as possible before an irreparable situation occurs on the prison site.”

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Socialists from Turkey go on solidarity hunger strikes in Cologne, Paris, Basel and London

ANF | 2 FEBRUARY 2024

Socialists from Turkey started 3-day solidarity hunger strikes in Cologne, Paris, Basel and London. The hunger strike actions, organised by the European Confederation of Oppressed Migrants (AVEG-KON), Voice of Prisoners Platform (TSP), Socialist Women’s Union (SKB) and Young Struggle, demand freedom for all political prisoners and an end to the isolation of Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan.

In a statement about the action, the Socialist Women’s Union in Europe (SKB) stated that they embrace the demands of the prisoners on hunger strike in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan, as well as the demands of 61 female prisoners on hunger strike in Iran’s Evin Prison.

Pointing to the arrest and execution of activists in Iranian prisons, especially after the killing of Jina Mahsa Amini by the fascist Mullah regime, SKB stated: “In recent weeks, 61 women political prisoners in Evin prison in Iran have gone on a hunger strike. The Kurdish female activist Sakineh Parvaneh in Mashhad

prison started a hunger strike in protest against the executions, and Zeynep Jalalian, who is under isolation in Yazd prison, went on hunger strike in support of those in Evin prison. As the Socialist Women's Union, we announce our support for the hunger strikes of women from Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan). We call for the immediate lifting of the isolation of political prisoners in Turkey and Kurdistan and freedom for political prisoners."

Paris

Hunger strike activists in Paris called for struggle and resistance against various fascist practices, such as the increase in the isolation torture in prisons, the lack of news from Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan for 3 years, the imposition of cell-type jail in Type-S and Type-Y prisons and the genocidal treatment of sick prisoners who are left to die in prison.

In parallel to the action, hunger strike activists are expanding their solidarity network by visiting various institutions.

The activists also visited the Ahmet Kaya Kurdish Cultural Centre and called for enhanced solidarity.

London

Kurdish People's Assembly members and writer Ali Poyraz also joined the hunger strike in London, which is carried out in the building of the London Migrant Workers' Cultural Association (Gik-Der).

Speaking about the action, Ali Akgül drew attention to the situation of sick prisoners and isolation in Turkey and said that they wanted to respond to the oppressive policies of the Turkish fascist state.

Ali Akgül said that their aim is to raise awareness in Turkey, Kurdistan and Europe against the fascist Turkish state's repressive and arbitrary practices in prisons, "because the isolation is applied to the peoples in the person of Mr Abdullah Öcalan in a racist, chauvinist way. The situation of sick prisoners is getting worse and worse, and their freedom must be ensured as soon as possible. While many sick prisoners are legally required to be released, they are denied release and left to die. In the last year, 78 political prisoners lost their lives in prisons. We call on all our people to take action on this issue and to increase their actions until they get results. Only in this way can we win," he said.

Background

Members of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and PAJK (Party of Free Women in Kurdistan) imprisoned in Turkey went on hunger strike on 27 November in support of the international [campaign](#) "Freedom for Öcalan, A Political Solution to the Kurdish Question". According to the prisoners' representative, Deniz Kaya, the hunger strike is carried out in alternating groups and will continue until 15 February.

27 November is the date of the PKK's 'founding congress' held in the village of Fis in the Lice district of Amed (Diyarbakır) in 1978. 15 February, on the other hand, is the day of the capture of Abdullah Öcalan as a result of an international conspiracy in Kenya in 1999, when he was handed over to Turkey and has been held under an aggravated isolation system since.



Military aggression and occupation

Damascus government prevents vital medicine supply to Şêxmeqsûd

ANF | ALEPPO | 27 JANUARY 2024

The Damascus government's siege and embargo imposed on Aleppo's neighbourhood of Şêxmeqsûd has been going on for 6 years. The embargo and siege conditions have worsened in recent months, with the Damascus government not allowing fuel, food and medicine to enter the neighbourhood. Citizens are having a hard time in the neighbourhood where even the most basic needs cannot be met.

According to the Pharmacists Association officials of the neighbourhood of Şêxmeqsûd and Eşrafiyê, the security forces do not allow essential medicines to enter the neighbourhoods. And for those medicines they allow into the area, they demand high amounts of money.

There are 61 pharmacies in the two neighbourhoods that provide medicine to 200 thousand people. According to the Pharmacists Association, the two neighbourhoods need approximately 3 billion Syrian lira worth of medicine every month.

Officials stated that the Damascus government allowed a very small amount of medicine to enter two neighbourhoods through checkpoints under its control, and said that the tax collected was approximately 10 percent of the value of the medicine bill.

Most pharmacies in both neighbourhoods do not have the necessary medications for diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Medicines are very expensive, even if they are available in some places. Because by the time they reach the two neighbourhoods, the prices of medicine increase as taxes are collected many times.

Prices of cancer drugs vary between 1 million and 20 million. These prices exceed the purchasing power of the majority of citizens living in the two neighbourhoods, most of whom are refugees from Afrin Canton.



'Turkish attacks on North-East Syria encourage ISIS cells, mainly in the Hol Camp'

HIVDA HEBUN | HESEKE | 28 JANUARY 2024

In 2019, thousands of ISIS families were relocated to Hol Camp after the Operation Cizire Storm carried out by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Since 2019, Hol has continued to pose a great danger due to the cells of ISIS gangs inside the camp.

Two operations have been carried out in the camp so far, one on 28 March 2021 and the other on 25 August 2022. On January 27, the Internal Security Forces in North-East Syria launched another operation with the support of SDF and YPJ (Women's Defense Units).

Speaking to ANF about the reasons and scope of the operation, Cihan Henan, co-chair of the Hol Camp Administration, stated that after the attacks of the Turkish state on North and East Syria, ISIS cells in the camp organised themselves more strongly.

Noting that the most recent move in Hol camp was launched as the third phase of the operations, Cihan Henan said, "This move is led by YPJ, SDF and internal security forces. Of course, the international coalition, which has always been with us in the fight against ISIS, will also take part in this move. We carried out the second phase in August 2022. At that time, there were too many executions in the camp and urgent intervention was needed. In the six months following this move, the situation in the camp improved considerably. Security was ensured. However, after six months, ISIS cells started to organise themselves again. Incidents started to happen in the camp again. An increasing number of theft started, while women were tortured. Some of the women who were tortured came to us. They said they had been extorted and tortured. One woman was even stabbed, and we had her treated in Heseke. Towards the end of 2023, the situation in the camp worsened. They started to kidnap people from the camp. Asayish arrested many people. Batteries and different materials started to be stolen from aid organisations. In the last two months, Asayish seized a large quantity of weapons. Abu Ubaydah, their emir, was killed. Therefore, there was a need for a move to ensure security again. Because not only the security and defence of the people inside the camp had to be ensured, but also the security of the people working in the camp from outside had to be secured. They attempted to stab two women to death, but we intervened early on. Their numbers were increasing day by day. In the most recent period, no one could work in the camp anymore. They were breaking all the lamps in the camp. It was already understood from the materials stolen in the camp that they were preparing for something. We received information that they gathered in front of aid organisations with their faces covered and with weapons in their hands. We also received information that they were moving around with weapons inside the camp."

Stressing that their re-organisation within the camp in such a short period of time could not be done without external support, Cihan Henan continued; "They definitely have relations with the outside. Because phones and the internet are not forbidden in the camp. Besides, the camp is very large, and their numbers are quite high. It is difficult to control them completely with the means at our disposal. There are too many people coming in and out of the camp. Sometimes a thousand people come in and out daily. There are workers, there are many employees of aid organisations coming from outside. At least 50-100 cars enter the camp every day. This makes entire control difficult. It is already certain that these movements are directed from outside. Because we always find weapons in every operation in the camp. We also capture members of many cells. This makes it necessary for us to make moves from time to time."

Cihan Henan stated that ISIS cells organised themselves more strongly in the camp after the Turkish state's attacks on North and East Syria; "Especially after the recent attacks of the Turkish state, there has been a lot of movement in the camp. They started to cause disturbances every day. They were gathering and at-

tacking security forces. No one could enter the camp. They broke the windows and headlights of cars. They smashed the heads of the workers. Again, drivers were beaten many times. They even attacked the Heyva Sor (Kurdish Red Crescent) vehicles that were going to take them to the hospital. The attacks of the Turkish state in particular cause much more damage to the camp. Every time there is an attack, the cells organise themselves even further. Because people cannot move freely due to the attacks of the Turkish state. This being the case, the cells in the camp can move more easily. Workers from Qamişlo, Hesekê and other cities cannot come to the camp. It becomes difficult to meet the needs. This time, they make an excuse that the needs are missing and create confusion. In fact, when the Turkish state attacks every region, ISIS cells take courage from this.”

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32 people kidnapped in Turkish-occupied Afrin in January

ANF | 29 JANUARY 2024

The Centre for Documenting Violations announced the names of 32 citizens abducted by the occupying Turkish state forces and allied gangs in the Afrin Canton in the month of January.

The Centre for Documenting Violations shared the following information regarding the abductions recorded in the city this month:

2 January 2024

The so-called ‘National Army’ (Sulayman Shah/Amshat) gangs kidnapped citizens named Rifet Behcet Hisên, Zekî. C, Zekeriya Mihemed Reşîd (51). The reason for their abduction was the non-payment of the 10-dollar tribute to the olive factories in Qermîtlîq village. The leader of the gang is Ebû Emşe.

Amshat gangs kidnapped a citizen named Derar Mehmûd Mustefa Dawûd. As Dawoud refused to leave his house, Ebû Emşe attempted to confiscate it, claiming that he did not have property documents with him and that the house belonged to his relative.

National Army-Political Security gangs kidnapped Kawa Ehmed Mihemed, a taxi driver, in Afrin city centre. Mihemed comes from the Qasha village in Bilbilê district.

National Army gangs kidnapped Arif Omer Elî (36) who came to Azaz after being deported from Turkey. He comes from the Meydankê village in Shera district.

3 January 2024

National army-intelligence agency gangs raided Upper Goliya village in Rajo district and kidnapped the residents Henîfe Silêman Silêman (20) and Zeyneb Silêman Silêman (21). The two women had been kidnapped at the age of 15 and 16 after the occupation of Afrin in 2018. They were then released for a ransom of 11 thousand dollars.

Civil Police gangs abducted Hesên Eslân Bekir Kote (46) from the Anqelê village in Shiye district.

5 January 2024

National Army gangs (plainclothes police) abducted Henîf Behrî Bekir (47) from Bilbilê district. Bekir was abducted while getting his personal ID card from the civil registry office and was taken to Maratê prison.

9 January 2024

National Army gangs (Military Police) abducted 4 children from Jindires district. The names of three children are as follows: Aşiq El Emûrî (7), Eshed El Ewêd (3) and Alaa Camûs (3).

10 January 2024

National Army gangs abducted Delîl Mustefa (32) from Maratê village.

Civil Police gangs abducted Sebrî Mihemed Şêxo (60) from Celemê village of Jindires district and took him to an unknown place.

12 January 2024

In Kurzêlê village, Suleyman Shah gangs kidnapped and tortured village headman Ebdo Nekar and many citizens in rural areas of Afrin on the pretext of not paying tribute (5 thousand dollars).

13 January 2024

The Siqûr El Şemal gangs, led by Hesên Xeyriye, kidnapped Êbrahîm Mihemed (38), a member of Sito family, from Ebûdanê village and demanded money for his release.

14 January 2024

Civil Police gangs abducted some citizens from Upper Goliya village in Rajo district. The names of the abducted citizens are as follows: Elî Mehmûd Silêman, Fatme Mihemed Silêman and Reynane Mihemed Yûsif. The same gangs also abducted sisters Zeyneb and Henîfe Silêman in the same month.

18 January 2024

Civil Police gangs abducted Ebdo Reşîd Henan (45) from Çolaqa village of Bilbilê district. Ebdo had also been abducted by the 9th Brigade gangs and released in exchange for money previously. His property is still in the hands of the National Army gangs.

19 January 2024

Military Police gangs abducted an elderly woman named Almaz (65), wife of Mihemed Birîm, from Hecîka village in Rajo district.

23 January 2024

Political Security gangs abducted Mihemed Mahmoud (53) and Mustefa Mihemed Bakr (33) from Upper Goliya village.

An elderly citizen named Elî Omer (71) from Elemara village in Rajo district was also abducted. The fate of engineer Remzî Hajj Reşîd from the same village, who was abducted in December 2022, is still unknown.

24 January 2024

Military Police gangs abducted Fîras Xelîl Nûrî (40), a citizen from Dêrsewanê village and working in Afrin, from city centre.

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

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

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

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

HPG releases footage of Turkish attacks with chemical and tactical nuclear weapons

ANF | BEHDINAN | 30 JANUARY 2024

A new one has been added to the war crimes committed by the Turkish army in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). Images of the attacks by the Turkey army with chemical and tactical nuclear weapons against guerrillas in Metina, and described by the HPG in two separate press releases on 18 and 20 December, were published.

The footage shows guerrilla positions being bombed with tactical nuclear and chemical weapons. The video also documents the destruction caused by the bombardment in the tunnels.

The HPG said that 4 guerrillas fell as martyrs in the attack, which it called a crime against humanity.

The HPG Press Contact Center said about the attacks on 18 and 20 December 2023: “On 14, 15 and 16 December our posts in the Girê Ortê Resistance Area in Metina were bombed 41 times with banned explosives and chemical gases, and once with a tactical nuclear bomb.

On 18 December, our posts in the Girê Ortê Resistance Area in the region of Metina were bombed twice with banned explosives and chemical gases.”

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Several gangs arrested in Hol Camp

ANF | HESEKE | 30 JANUARY 2024

The Internal Security Forces in North and East Syria Region launched the third phase of ‘Operation Humanity and Security’ in the Hol (al-Hol) Camp in Heseke on January 27. The campaign seeks to pursue ISIS terrorist cells, eliminate their strongholds, and capture individuals and collaborators involved in terrorist activities, attacks and spreading extremist ideologies, especially among children. The operation is also participated by the Women’s Defense Units (YPJ) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), supported by the international coalition against ISIS.

During the search operations carried out in the camp on Tuesday, many gangs and accomplices were arrested upon the confessions of the arrested gangs, while 3 hand grenades, 2 suicide bomb vests, 2 Kalashnikov rifles and 10 bullet magazines and many Tramadol needles were seized.

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The ‘PKK centres’ bombed by Turkey in northern Iraq turn out to be civilian homes

KURTAY SERHAT | BEHDINAN | 30 JANUARY 2024

Turkish warplanes bombed the villages of Spîndarê, Mijê and Kevne Mijê in Amadiya in the Duhok Governorate of Kurdistan Region of Iraq on 16 January. In an official statement about the aggression, the Turkish state claimed that ‘PKK centres were hit’.

Contrary to the Turkish state’s claims, the places that were bombed turned out to be the houses and stables belonging to the villagers. The residents still cannot go back to their villages. KDP authorities do not allow the people to return.

The Turkish state bombed a farm in Sergelê village of Amadiya on 25 January and the health centre in Kevne Mijê village on 26 January. In addition to heavy bombardment, the region is also targeted by attacks with mortars and tanks deployed in the region.

Meanwhile, reports say that KDP officials warned the mukhtars of many villages in the valley between Amadiya and Sheladize to be prepared to evacuate their villages in the near future.

Turkey relies on the KDP to realize its attack and occupation plans against Southern Kurdistan. Cooperating with the Turkish state, the KDP provides all kinds of support to the occupying army. The Turkish state, Asayish (local public order forces) and KDP-affiliated Peshmerga forces have forcibly evacuated and depopulated nearly 600 villages in Southern Kurdistan so far.

The KDP, controlled by the Barzani family, is largely dependent on and closely allied with the AKP/MHP regime. The Turkish state is trying to use the KDP as a tool to trigger an internal Kurdish civil war. The recent deployment of troops by the KDP shows the extent of the danger. In recent years, the KDP has repeatedly set up ambushes against the guerrillas, marked targets for Turkish airstrikes, captured guerrillas and even “disappeared” them. The KDP’s intelligence service Parastin supports the Turkish intelligence service MIT in its attacks against Kurdish activists in southern Kurdistan. So far, a major escalation could only be avoided thanks to the patient attitude of the guerrillas, who are trying to build a Kurdish unity. However, as the Turkish army seems to be on the defensive again in its current large-scale attack on the guerrilla-held Medya Defence Zones, a relief attack by the KDP is becoming increasingly likely.

On 13 September 2023, the KDP dispatched hundreds of armored vehicles and heavy weapons to Bradost after forcibly evacuating the nomads from the region through threats, repression and use of force. A part of the KDP force attacked the positions of the guerrillas at Gewriya Zînê in the Goşîne area the following day.

In the last two years, in particular, the Turkish state, with the help of the KDP, has attempted to connect many areas from which the civilian population has been displaced and to create a buffer zone along the border of South Kurdistan. This area stretches from Behdînan to Bradost. Numerous bases have been established along the Amêdiyê front. Although these are ostensibly KDP forces, there are Turkish troops in

these bases. The Turkish army, which recently established a new base in the Bradost region, is trying to further increase its activities in this region. It has established many new bases in the Balekayetî region. The KDP forces have made all preparations for this. The Turkish state has also established new bases in the Mehmudiyê region on the borders of Rojava with South Kurdistan as well as on the borders of Zaxo and Batûfa. The aim is to expand this buffer zone and prepare a hinterland for a new invasion operation against Rojava. Those who oppose the occupation are attacked and murdered on the basis of intelligence provided by the KDP troops. At present, attempts are being made to completely encircle the Medya Defence Zones in South Kurdistan and create a military buffer zone with these bases and bases that have already been built before.

Turkey has been attacking the Medya Defence Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) for years. In April 2022, a comprehensive operation was launched in the guerrilla regions of Zap, Metîna and Avaşîn. As the invasion did not achieve the desired success, the Turkish state is attempting to establish itself in the area via the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party), the ruling party dominated by the Barzani clan. KDP forces are establishing new bases and building military roads for the Turkish troops. In order to grant Turkey free access, the villagers are being driven out of the affected areas.

According to journalist Baran Germiyani, who lives in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and spoke to Mezopotamya news agency (MA) in November, 158 villages have already been evacuated and at least 600 villages are threatened with eviction because the KDP is exerting pressure during the ongoing Turkish attacks. Germiyani stated that Turkey has not achieved the desired results in the region and that the KDP is clearing the way for Turkey with its depopulation policy.

In an interview in November, Cemil Bayık, Co-Chair of the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) Executive Council, commented on the KDP's role in the Turkish state's genocidal campaign against the Kurdish people, stating the following: "Those in the KDP who currently dominate the Behdînan region are from Massoud Barzani's side of the family. They are working only for their own interests and those of their families, thus serving the genocidal policies of the Turkish state. This is happening under the eyes of public opinion. Anyone who claims to be Kurdish, patriotic, politically conscientious and moral must see this. This is not a policy that anyone can accept. Serving the policy of the genociders does not benefit the Kurdish people. Therefore, democrats, patriots, politically conscientious and moral people need to see who is serving the Kurdish people and who is serving the politics of genocide. Patriotism means standing up against the politics of genocide. The Turkish state is waging this war with the support of the KDP. Not only in the Medya Defense Zones, but also in Northern and Southern Kurdistan, as well as in Rojava and in different parts of the world. The Turkish state's policy against the Kurdish people is carried out with the support of the KDP and especially Masoud Barzani. If they did not support them, the Turkish state would not be able to carry out this policy of genocide against the Kurdish people."

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ISIS elements arrested in a large-scale SDF operation in Raqqa countryside

Following the recent bloody conflict between the clans of al-Madlaj al-Dhahir and al-Jammasa which was exploited by ISIS terrorists and the regime mercenaries, and based on requests from tribal leaders, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ), with the participation of Internal Security Forces, launched a large-scale security operation in the al-Hamrat area, east of Raqqa city.

According to the SDF Media Centre, the operation began in the early morning hours on January 29, and resulted in the arrest of many criminal elements linked to ISIS terrorist cells and Syrian regime mercenaries. Quantities of weapons and ammunition were also seized.

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People's Defense Forces publish balance sheet of war for January

ANF | BEHDINAN | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

The People's Defense Forces (HPG) Press Centre published the balance sheet of war for the first month of 2024 and said that 99 Turkish soldiers were killed during clashes and revolutionary operations in January.

During the same period, the Turkish army carried out 6 attacks against guerrillas with banned weapons, and three guerrillas fell as martyrs.

The monthly balance sheet includes the list of clashes, revolutionary operations and Turkish attacks. Guerrillas carried out a total of 79 separate actions against the Turkish army in January, one of which was a large-scale revolutionary operation. In these actions, 99 Turkish soldiers were killed and 12 were injured. During the same period, 3 guerrillas fell as martyrs.

21 positions, 5 mobile cameras, 1 military vehicle, 1 ammunition depot, 2 logistics places, 3 containers, 2 radar systems, 1 thermal mobile camera, 2 A4 guns were destroyed in the guerrillas' actions.

Guerrillas seized a lot of military equipment

The statement said that the guerrillas seized a large number of military equipment belonging to the Turkish army, including 2 BKC automatic weapons, 7 MPT Infantry rifles, 5 grenade launchers, and 12 binoculars, 5 of which are thermal and 7 of which are night vision.

The HPG also announced in its balance sheet that the Turkish army carried out 238 attacks by warplanes in January. Guerrilla positions were attacked using banned explosives 6 times, and the Turkish army used explosive-laden drones 18 times.

The HPG statement also said that the balance sheet data shows that the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla continued its historical resistance against denial, destruction, genocide and isolation policies and occupation attacks, under severe winter conditions, and added: "The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla's ability to keep this level in all kinds of terrain, everywhere and at any time, regardless of whether it was summer or win-

ter, has been a great gain for our people's struggle for freedom. Our guerrillas, who made a strong start to the new year, determined the direction of the 2024 struggle and showed the way to success.”

The HPG balance sheet statement reads as follows:

“Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla continued its historical resistance against the politics of denial, destruction, genocide and isolation, and occupation attacks, uninterruptedly in the first month of 2024. Our forces, which responded to all kinds of attacks by the invading Turkish state even in severe winter conditions, demonstrated a significant war performance with the revolutionary operations and actions they developed. The level achieved by the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla on the basis of restructuring, the depth of tactics, high performance, mastery of movement and action style, and the ability to master all these with great creativity have proven the accuracy of the war doctrine developed by the HPG. It has been seen once again that when the Apoist sacrificial spirit and the tactical style of democratic modernity guerrillas are put into action with great determination and creativity, no force can stand in their way and they can achieve their goal by defeating all kinds of enemy techniques. The revolutionary operations and actions carried out by our forces not only dealt a heavy blow to the invading Turkish army, but also shook the fascist AKP-MHP regime and demonstrated that the genocide policy based on denial and destruction can never yield results.

The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla's ability to keep this level in all kinds of terrain, everywhere and at any time, regardless of whether it was summer or winter, has been a great gain for our people's struggle for freedom. Our guerrillas, who made a strong start to the new year, determined the direction of the 2024 struggle and showed the way to success.

Our comrades Serxwebûn Serhed, Rizgar Çavreş and Jêhat, who participated in the tough struggle in January with an Apoist self-sacrificing spirit and overcame all difficulties and dealt great blows to the enemy, fell as martyrs. We reiterate once again our promise to achieve their goals by following in the footsteps of our heroic comrades who gave great impetus to our struggle by bringing it to this level.

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20 killed as HRE retaliates against the occupying Turkish state

ANF | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

“As the defense force of our people, we do not remain silent in the face of attacks, and we carry out actions of revenge,” said the Afrin Liberation Forces (HRE) in a written statement providing details of their latest actions against the occupation forces.

The HRE statement on Thursday said: “The occupying Turkish state and jihadist DAESH (ISIS) gangs have been carrying out a policy of genocide and massacre against our people since they occupied Afrin. The occupying forces have displaced hundreds of thousands of our people and are constantly attacking our people. The enemy massacres thousands of our people every day, attacks and insults our sacred values. The occupiers and their gangs are carrying out a policy of genocide against the Kurds living in Afrin and its villages, committing crimes against humanity. They kidnap the people living in those regions, trying to silence our people by spreading terror and driving them into fear and panic. With all these practices, the oc-

cupiers cut down hundred-year-old olive trees, which are the source of livelihood of our people, and leave our people defenseless by massacring nature.

The occupiers are not only attacking Afrin, but also our people who migrated from Afrin. Along with the attacks of the jihadist gangs, our people who migrated from Aleppo and Shehba are also bombarded by artillery and warplanes. Hundreds of our people lost their lives as a result of these attacks.

Enemy attacks on the living spaces of our people have increased recently. Dozens of our people, including children and women, have been martyred, mainly as a result of airstrikes.

No power speaks out against these massacres and the attacks of the invaders that are perpetrated in front of the eyes of the whole world. We, as the defense force of our people, do not remain silent in the face of attacks, we carry out revenge actions. Within the scope of these activities, our fighters carried out a comprehensive action against the occupying army base in Basilê village of Sherawa district on January 30. Our friends moved on the enemy with great determination and dealt heavy blows to the enemy forces.”

HRE provided the following details about the action: “12 occupying Turkish soldiers and 8 gangs were killed, while 8 soldiers and 17 gangs were wounded. In addition, 1 DShK machine gun, 1 heavy weapon position, 2 surveillance cameras and 18 trenches were destroyed.

5 of our comrades who moved on against the enemy fearlessly and fought heroically fell as martyrs. The identities of our martyred comrades will be shared with the public later.”

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109 organizations in Syria issue call for urgent international action against Turkish attacks

ANF | QAMISHLO | 2 FEBRUARY 2024

109 organizations in Syria made a statement regarding the genocidal attacks by the Turkish state targeting the infrastructure of Northern and Eastern Syria.

The statement saw the participation of organization representatives in the region and was read by Mizgîn Hisên, Executive member of the Union of Civil Society Organizations of Northern and Eastern Syria Office.

Hisên said that the statement will be sent to international organizations, councils and the governments of the countries working in the region, and added that the international community, governments and international organizations should join their call in order to alleviate the suffering of people affected by the attacks, re-establish basic services and ensure stability in the region.

Urgent help needed

Hisên said that the humanitarian crisis in Northern and Eastern Syria has reached its worst level, and therefore the international community must provide urgent assistance. She added that conflicts in the region have been continuing for years, the suffering of the people of the region has increased and migration has been occurring continuously. Hisên pointed out that as a result of the direct targeting of the infrastructure in Turkey's latest attack, there was a significant decrease in basic services such as gas, water, electricity and oil.

Permanent solutions must be produced

Hisên said that the crisis can be solved together with the international community, "because the crisis goes beyond organizations and individual countries. The government, civil society organizations and international organizations need to come together and produce urgent aid and permanent solutions."

Hisên called on the international community, governments and international organizations to urgently join their call to alleviate the suffering of the affected people, restore basic services and ensure lasting stability.



1,858 howitzers, mortars and artillery fired at Afrin and Shehba in one month

ANF | 2 FEBRUARY 2024

Afrin-Shehba region defense forces announced the balance sheet of the attacks carried out by the Turkish state and its mercenaries in January.

According to the balance sheet, the occupiers attacked the Afrin and Shehba regions 152 times between 1 and 31 January 2024.

55 areas of Afrin and Shehba were targeted in the attacks carried out with howitzers, mortars, tanks, grenades, B7 rockets, missiles and attack drones.

Reconnaissance and fighter planes also flew continuously over the region throughout the month.

According to the balance sheet, the invaders fired 1709 mortar rounds, 72 hand grenades, 73 tank rounds and 4 rockets into the region during the month.

In the attack on the village of Şealê on 17 January, 3 people from the same family were injured.

A soldier affiliated with the Damascus government was injured in the attack on the village of Soxaneke. In the same village, an armed drone belonging to the invaders was shot down.

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Four members of Internal Security Forces killed in Turkish drone attack in Qamishlo

ANF | QAMISHLO | 2 FEBRUARY 2024

The Internal Security Forces (ISF) of North and East Syria reported in a written statement that the occupying Turkish state targeted a building belonging to the Internal Security Forces with an armed unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).

“As part of the systematic attacks carried out by the occupying Turkish army against the region, our Internal Security Centre in the east of Qamishlo was targeted by an Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) in the morning hours today (2 February), resulting in the martyrdom of 4 of our companions and injury of one another,” the statement said.

According to the statement, a group of ISF members were targeted by the occupying Turkish army on the seventh day of the third phase of Operation Humanity and Security in Hol Camp when they arrived at the ISF Centre in Qamishlo to get supplies for the internal security forces partaking in the operation.

“The occupying Turkish state is targeting the Internal Security Forces who are struggling to prevent the ongoing operation in Hol Camp, which houses ISIS families. Through these attacks, it manifests its open support for the revival of DAESH (ISIS) gangs,” said the statement.

The Internal Security Forces stressed that the targeted attack against their forces “will not distract us from our main struggle. On the contrary, we will protect our region with a stronger will and determination.”

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Femicide

Turkish attacks destroying the future of a generation of young women

ANF | 27 JANUARY 2024

Women Defend Rojava begins with Bêrîvan Mihemed to tell a series of stories of young women murdered by the Turkish army in North and East Syria. Young women who took their share of responsibility in a war-torn region and died at their places of work. They leave families in pain, but also a society that remains determined to leave the time of war behind and to build peaceful and democratic coexistence together with all the ethnic groups of the region.

Bêrîvan Mihemed – a shattered “love for life”

Bêrîvan Mihemed is one of the victims of the Turkish attacks in North and East Syria during the Christmas period in 2023. She was an employee of the Sîmav printing house, which was deliberately destroyed in a Turkish air strike on 25 December.

Bêrîvan was a young woman of around thirty, who impressed her family and peers with her love for life. In a region and society marked by war and destruction, and under the influence of the achievements of a women’s revolution, she had decided to go her own way.

She grew up with her family in the town of Qamishlo, the only daughter of her parents and the only sister of her three brothers. Her birth was a great joy for the whole family, and Bêrîvan grew up surrounded by affection. She studied electricity, but then stayed with her family for several years without a job. She did not want to marry. She helped her mother with the housework. She loved life and brought warmth and joy to the house, and she was loyal and loving to her parents. When she saw that her father was worried or sad, she was with him and asked him how he was. She tried to ease his situation and hugged him until he forgot his worries.

She was an intelligent, kind and helpful young woman. She respected young and old and was loved and respected by everyone, neighbours, relatives and colleagues.

The Sîmav printing house was founded in 2013 with 14 employees at the beginning and expanded in 2017. It was a close friend of the family who offered Bêrîvan a job in the printing house. She was happy to be there for her family, but she also felt unfulfilled and wanted to develop herself, so she finally accepted the offer.

The printing house printed magazines, books, brochures and newspapers with a weekly circulation of 6,000 pieces. Bêrîvan had worked there for 6 years. She started working in the post-press section and later

became responsible for financial accounting. On the morning of 25 December, Bêrîvan went to work at 8:00 like the other 26 employees. At around 10.30am, Turkey began a series of air strikes and drone attacks on civilian targets in the city of Qamishlo, including several workplaces such as garment, cement and cotton factories. One of the targets was the Sîmav printing house.

Targeting civilian homes and workplaces is a violation of international law. Since 2018, in addition to the illegal occupation of the border areas around the towns of Efrîn, Sêrekaniyê and Girêspî, Turkey has continued to carry out waves of attacks against civilian infrastructure in the region of North and East Syria with impunity. It is deliberately attacking the autonomous administration and the structures that provide services to the people. Many people have fled the consequences of the civil war in Syria and the attacks of the Islamic State. Many have stayed to build and defend the autonomous administration in the hope of finally being able to lead a self-determined life – based on their own language and culture and with a desire for freedom – including women in particular. Turkey is punishing them for this.

Just as many families have lost their children, Bêrîvan's family is now left without their daughter: "What does Erdogan want from us? What does he want with our children? Not a day passes without sadness and blood. Why is he taking our lives? What have we done that he kills us every moment? When will our suffering and pain end?"



Turkish attacks destroying the future of a generation of young women - PART II

ANF | 28 JANUARY 2024

With Aya Ali al-Muhammad, Women Defend Rojava continues to tell a series of stories of young women murdered by the Turkish army in North and East Syria. Young women who took their share of responsibility in a war-torn region and died at their places of work. They leave families in pain, but also a society that remains determined to leave the time of war behind and to build peaceful and democratic coexistence together with all the ethnic groups of the region.

Aya – a young cotton worker, hit by drones

Aya Ali al-Muhammad's little sister sits in the corner of the room, crying as she listens to the words of her mother, who speaks to us with pain and condemnation. She says: Aya and her companions did not carry weapons to confront Turkish planes. Why were they killed in this horrible, inhumane way? How long will these inhumane crimes continue? And why is the world, civil society and all the human rights organizations silent?

Every day the suffering of the civilian population in North- and East Syria is renewed as the Turkish state attacks the region's infrastructure with drones and missiles and destroys electricity and water supplies, factories and institutions. With these attacks, Turkey is trying to destabilize the situation in the region, create

chaos and revive the terrorist organization ISIS, occupy more areas in North- and East Syria, displace people and in this way cause ethnic cleansing and demographic changes in the region.

One of the victims of these attacks is Aya Ali al-Muhammad, a young girl who was only 17 years old. She died as a result of a rocket attack on a cotton factory on December 25, 2023, in the city of Qamishli.

Aya attended primary school in Al-Hajiya village, which was part of the city of Qamishli. With the start of the revolution and because of the subsequent attacks by the Islamic State, Turkey and the economic embargo against the developing self-government in the region, the family was forced to move to the city of Qamishli in order to secure job opportunities and the family's livelihood.

As a result, Aya was unable to continue her schooling and read and write what she had not learned.

Aya's family belongs to the region's poor households. Together with the mother and father, the aunt, the siblings, cousins, the family consisting of 13 people, including 8 children, lives together in one house. The father works in the community and the older brothers are also workers.

Like all young women of her generation, Aya loved life and she filled the house with joy and happiness in an entertaining way. She liked to joke, enjoyed dressing up, loved beautiful clothes, perfume and, above all, chocolate.

Aya had decided to work in the nearby cotton factory to help support the family. They worked alongside dozens of other men and women for their daily bread. There, the cotton brought in from the fields was effortfully gutted using cotton gins and hands to prepare it for further processing.

On the morning of December 25th, Aya left the house without breakfast as usual and went to the factory with her friends. In the afternoon, the family heard the sounds of explosions in the city. Little did they know that the cotton factory where Aya worked had also been attacked by Turkish drones.

Aya was killed and two other young women were injured. The factory was not a military base or ammunition depot, but rather a source of livelihood for many families in the district, which was predominantly inhabited by Arab families.



Yazidi women's conference ends with calls to the international community

ANF | BRUSSELS | 31 JANUARY 2024

The international conference on the topic "Shengal – A society threatened by genocide – reconstruction as a guarantee for peace in the Middle East" took place in the European Parliament in Brussels on Tuesday. The conference was organized by the umbrella organization of the Yazidi Women's Councils (SMJÊ) in cooperation with the Central Association of Yazidi Associations in Germany.

The day-long conference was held on the 10th anniversary of the genocide and femicide of the Yazidi community in the Shengal region of northern Iraq. The genocide was carried out by the Islamic State on 3 August. Several states have recognized the horrendous massacres as genocide.

Among other things, the questions discussed included what humanitarian obligations arise for states from recognizing the genocide of the Yazidis and what methods should be used to rebuild Shengal.

The conference ended with the listing of a number of demands and recommendations for action to the international community. The 15-point final declaration lists the following topics, among others:

Prosecute those responsible for the genocide

The conference called on international organizations, in particular the United Nations and the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, to investigate the statements contained in its report. The UN, the European Parliament and many national parliaments have recognized the atrocities committed in Shengal as genocide, and other parliaments and international organizations should join in. "We also demand that states and institutions that recognize the genocide take measures to prosecute those responsible. International efforts should be made to free the thousands of Yazidi women and children still held by ISIS.

Allow return to Shengal

The Yazidis who fled in 2014 must be allowed to return to Shengal. The KDP must be asked not to further complicate the return of people. The repair of the war damage and the reconstruction of Shengal need international support.

Legal prosecution of state support for ISIS

The support of ISIS by states such as Turkey in particular is not being prosecuted legally. This is not only shameful, but also paves the way for new massacres. Great importance is attached to the Yazidi Justice Committee (YJC) report entitled "State Responsibility and the Yazidi Genocide" published in July 2022.

Stop Turkish attacks

The countries that have recognized the genocide against the Yazidi community must use political, diplomatic and legal means to stop Turkey's attacks on the Shengal region. The airspace must be closed to military air traffic.

Cancellation of the Shengal Agreement

The UN, the Iraqi government and the European Parliament should view the Shengal Agreement signed on 9 October 2020 as a concept for a continuation of the genocide and femicide against the Yazidis and annul it. The Yazidi organizations and institutions in Shengal must be involved in all decisions.

Searching for missing women

The conference called on UN Women and the European Union Commission on Women to identify Yazidi women and girls through special investigations in the countries where they are trafficked and to take legal action on this issue.

3 August should be designated femicide day

The conference called on the European Parliament to designate 3 August as femicide day against women to prevent massacres against women from being included in geostrategic and geopolitical calculations in the future.

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Local Elections in Turkey

DEM candidates to the local elections will be officially presented on Monday

ANF | ANKARA | 28 JANUARY 2024

People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) spokesperson Ayşegül Doğan held a press conference at the party's headquarters about the party's Central Executive Board (MYK) meeting.

Doğan talked about the primary elections held in the past weeks in several cities to determine the candidates to the local elections to be held on 31 March and said: "This process has been completed. We have said before in these primary elections, which were held as an example of direct democracy in the Kurdish provinces, that we not only select our mayors and candidates, our provincial council members were also voted by the people. We said that we would respect the results of the primary elections, evaluate the objections, and when irregularities were detected, we would activate the relevant mechanisms established and leave the decision to the initiative of the people, taking into account these objections and irregularities. We did our part. The people also did their part. We have now started preparations to publically present the candidates. We will hold a meeting in Amed on Monday, 29 January."

Doğan added: "This is the first time we are holding such a primary election process and that's why we said there may have been some shortcomings. We talked about a serious local democracy experience. Be assured that your findings will be guiding for the DEM Party, coming from a political party tradition that hears and values criticism, suggestions, deficiencies and shortcomings."

Giving information about the cities of interest, Ayşegül Doğan said: “Istanbul, Adana, Muğla, Aydın, Kars, Mersin, Hatay, Dêrsim are not the cities we specifically chose, but these are the provinces about which people are most curious about. They keep asking what will the DEM Party do in Istanbul, in Adana, in Muğla? As we have explained before, we are aware of this situation, therefore, we are working in a serious and responsible way.

All options are being evaluated. In addition, our collaboration efforts within the scope of Urban Consensus continue. A lot of progress has been made in this regard so far. However, we proceed carefully and consider the options that will benefit the people.”

No Dersim without DEM, no DEM without Dersim

Doğan continued: “While our multifaceted negotiations continue as a party in favor of the broadest union of forces, a statement regarding Dersim has been made. We know that Dersim cannot exist without DEM and DEM cannot exist without Dersim. In Dersim, EMEK Party, Socialist Assemblies Federation (SMF), Labor and Freedom Front, and Turkish Workers' Party announced their decision to work to establish an alliance in the 31 March elections. Our negotiations are continuing. As DEM Party, we continue our work on the basis of the urban reconciliation strategy. Dersim, among these provinces, has a special importance for us. Because, let's remember that Dersim is one of the provinces that was taken from us by trustees in the previous period.”

If Başak Demirtaş wants to be a candidate, her address is DEM Party

Ayşegül Doğan also talked about Başak Demirtaş's possible candidacy in Istanbul, and said: “Başak Demirtaş is our comrade. She worked in the fields for the elections of 14-28 May. If Başak Demirtaş wants to get involved in politics, of course it will be with the DEM Party. I think it would be surprising otherwise. Başak Demirtaş herself expressed it clearly, when she said, ‘I have not received such a proposal from our party, but should it come, I am ready.’ So, clearly, if one day she wants to do politics or become a candidate, the address is the DEM Party.”

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DEM Party presents female co-mayor candidates

ANF | AMED | 29 JANUARY 2024

The Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) organised a promotional event in Amed (Diyarbakır) for the female co-mayors it will nominate for the 31 March local elections. DEM Party Co-Chair Tülay Hatimoğulları and Democratic Regions Party (DBP) Co-Chair Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar as well as many people attended the event held at a hotel in the city. Banners such as “Women's will for local democracy” were hung in the hall where the event was organised. “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” (Woman, Life, Freedom) and “Local democracy with women's will against male state violence” banners in 11 languages were also displayed in the hall.

‘Local and decentralised democracy’

Speaking at the programme that started with a minute of silence, DEM Party Women’s Assembly Spokesperson Halide Türkoğlu stated that they witnessed historic moments and said that they welcomed the 31 March elections with this hope and morale. Halide Türkoğlu stated that they set out by saying “local and decentralised democracy” and said, “Co-presidency is not a model that is implemented only for women. The co-presidency system allows men, too, to take part in an equal life without being exploited, which is the name of the declaration of will of the societies that have been ignored until today. The monist mentality and nation state understanding that the male-dominated mentality has been accustomed to until today is trying to move forward. Today, this understanding is trying to exist with trusteeship. This model is also a women’s model.”

‘Co-presidency system shows the stage reached by women’s struggle’

Noting that the co-presidency system also showed the stage reached by the thousands of years of women’s struggle, Türkoğlu said, “Our system is not only inspired by the struggle of Kurdish women in Kurdistan. It also takes inspiration from the women’s struggle in the world. As representatives of the future, we will never compromise on this. Co-presidency is our purple line, our reason for struggle. No matter how much they attack, we will fight. Our Siirt candidate was supposed to be here today but she was detained. Neither journalism nor co-presidency is a crime. We will fight for this.”

‘Monist regimes are wanted to be built through trustees’

Stating that “monist” regimes are wanted to be built through usurper trustees, Türkoğlu continued:

“As of 31 March, we will rebuild our line of struggle, especially in social and political areas. First, we will send the trustees away. There is experience, we have many friends here. We have women co-chairs and politicians in prison. The trustees closed women’s centres, which we will bring back to life. We will reopen our cooperatives that they closed so that women can live with equality and dignity. We will revitalise our agriculture-based production areas. We will try to put forward the strongest will in the field of language, culture and art. We will bring our art-culture centres and youth centres to life in order to remove the destruction of their trusteeship. If violence against women is increasing in Amed, it is because of the trustees. The trustees who shut down women’s institutions are also responsible for the femicides. You will be held accountable. We need to sweep away the trustee mentality for cleaner and safer streets.

Message for a ‘new life’

We draw strength from our women friends resisting in prison. Right now, our friends are on hunger strike for the isolation of Mr Abdullah Öcalan to be lifted and for peace to come. We are also on our way with our claim to weave a new life. Maybe we will pay a price. But there can be no new life without paying a price. We are realising our 3rd road policy in our claim for a new life. We did not elect a mayor in the primary elections. We elected a new administration for all the oppressed in the person of a woman and a man. We salute the entire delegation. Our co-mayor candidates have a serious responsibility. I say Serkeftin (Success).”

After the speech, a cinevision presentation was shown. DEM Party's women's election music was also introduced at the event.

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DEM Party Co-Chair: We will implement a women's libertarian local government

ANF | AMED | 29 JANUARY 2024

The Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) presented its women co-mayoral candidates at an event organised in Amed (Diyarbakır) today. Speaking at the presentation event, DEM Party Co-Chair Tülay Hatimoğulları started her speech by greeting the imprisoned women politicians in prison. Hatimoğulları said, "We send our greetings and love to all our women comrades who are held hostage in prison. We promise that our struggle will continue until we break down those walls and melt those iron bars."

Tülay Hatimoğulları pointed out that all women have come to this day by joining hands and said, "If we are in this hall, we owe it to the history of women's struggle against the 5 thousand years of male-dominated system, especially feudalism. We owe it to Kurdish women, we owe it to Turkish women. We owe it to the struggle of all women living in this region."

The Co-Chair of the DEM Party further stated the following:

"The primary elections we have held are a plebiscite that will be an example not only for Turkey but for the whole world. We have all witnessed the primaries that parties simply hold. We have also held similar primaries in the past. In this voting we held, not only DEM Party members, but also our friends who were executives in the past, all the democratic forces and dynamics of that city took part. In fact, we have implemented what we call urban consensus. We have ensured the manifestation of direct democracy. Because the people chose the candidates by their own will, and this is a very valuable thing. Nearly 5 thousand friends and comrades laboured and worked for this plebiscite. In your presence, we would like to extend our endless thanks to our comrades who worked for it.

We are doing politics in an atmosphere where our geography is surrounded by wars and barrels pointed at the peoples, in a phase where warships are positioned everywhere, especially in the Red Sea. Yes, we are in very difficult conditions. While doing politics at a time when fascist, racist, nationalist, male-dominated currents rule the world, the difficulties we experience are present in the practice of all of us. We are women who have been oppressed and exploited for 5 thousand years. We know this very well; when fascist and racist movements come to power, the oppression and exploitation of women increases exponentially. This is exactly what we are experiencing in Turkey right now. One side of us is the war, the other side is the deepest exploitation and oppression by the AKP-MHP government. As dear Gültan Kışanak said, 'we, as women, will make our greatest career by tearing down their tyrannical power. It is our promise to all our comrades'.

I salute all the women all over the world, from Chile to Argentina, from Tahrir Square to Rojava, from Baghdad to Hewlêr, who say ‘we do not obey, we do not submit, we fight. Greetings to the Klara Zetkins, Roza Luxemburghs, Behice Borans, Şirin Tekellis, Sakines, Sevês, Hevrîn Xelefs. Thousands of greetings to them. We promise them that in the 31 March elections, we will win the municipalities one by one, especially with the female candidates, send the trustees away one by one, settle accounts with the trustee mentality, and strengthen democracy at the local level with the approach of a democratic ecological municipalism and women’s libertarian local government. Most of the responsibility falls on us. We promise that on the evening of 31 March, we will present the victory of 31 March as a gift to all women who have paid the price, who have been martyred for this cause, to all women in prison, to our mothers on hunger strike, to our mothers on Justice Vigil, to our mothers who do not give up saying ‘peace’ even after receiving the remains of their children by post. I wish you all success.”

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Tekin: The government is trying to usurp the will of the people

ANF | AMED | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

The AKP-MHP government continues to shift voters to many cities where it failed to get the desired result in the previous elections. While there is little time left for the local elections, the trustees who usurped the municipalities in Kurdistan are resorting to new tricks through the government. It has already been detected with documents that voters have been irregularly transferred to many districts and towns in the Kurdish region. While the Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) continues to work on the allegations in the field, it has objected to these irregularities detected in many places. The objections made by the DEM Party were rejected by the Supreme Election Board (YSK). Shortly before the 31 March 2024 local elections, thousands of soldiers and police officers were registered as voters in many cities.

DEM Party Amed (Diyarbakır) Provincial Co-Chair Pınar Sakık Tekin spoke to ANF about the voters irregularly shifted to Kurdistan cities.

“The ruling coalition, which cannot tolerate the gains of our party and our people, has dealt with the election results of 2019 at every ballot box, and by surgically intervening in them, they have embarked on a way of transporting voters that will affect the election results. Especially in many provinces of Kurdistan, mobile voter transport is being carried out. The government, which has constantly usurped the will of the people during the past two terms and fallen into the disgrace of appointing trustees, which is one of the pillars of the updated Eastern Reform Plan, aims to cheat and steal at the polls again. It is doing this in many places, carrying voters in the places it lost by a small margin in the 2019 elections,” Tekin stated.

The government resorts to dirty attacks

The AKP-MHP government knows that they cannot win the municipalities in Kurdistan, so they resort to irregularities, said Tekin and continued, “They aim to win the elections by shifting voters. We do not remain silent against this criminal politics. We will file a criminal complaint against both those who transport and those who are involved in this transport. We will show them how democracy is. We showed them what democracy is by organising a primary election in Kurdistan, which we call ‘Democracy Feast’.

With this primary election, we have kept democracy in the hearts of the people and we will continue to do so. As a party, we do not accept this apolitical behaviour, but we are trying to create conditions for all our people to express their political will by bringing them to the polls. AKP resorts to dirty attacks the moment it realises that it is losing. We will frustrate these attacks at the ballot boxes.”

Soldiers and policemen registered as voters

Tekin stated that according to the data obtained by the party, voters were shifted from the Black Sea region to Kurdistan and added: “Voters have been registered in places without addresses. There is transportation especially to the districts of Kulp, Hazro and Eğil in Amed. As a party, we made objections to the district election board, but our objections were rejected on the grounds that ‘the people in question are formally commissioned’. Therefore, we made a general application to the Supreme Election Board. We are currently waiting for its answer. We expect the Supreme Election Board to take a fair duty and responsibility for a truly democratic election in Kurdistan. We will stand against this government, which seeks to usurp the will of the people with trustees and voter transfer, both in the primary elections and in the stages to follow. We will carry out our work to take back what has been stolen from us. We will show that there cannot be a people without a party, and no party without the people, and that they are in solidarity with each other. They are afraid of the will and the achievements of the people. We are aware of this. We are making gains with a high rate of votes in Kurdistan. I see this vote rate as a reflection of the democratic politics we are pursuing.”

We will protect the will of our people

Drawing attention to the importance of local elections, Tekin said, “We need to be vigilant. We need to work very carefully. We will expose all injustices done to us during the election process. We will tackle this process together with our people. Therefore, our people have a lot of work here. As the DEM Party, we carry out our work based on data. That is why our people have a lot of work to do here. As the DEM Party, we are carrying out our work based on facts. We promise that we will protect the will of our people before, during and after the election.”

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Human Rights Violations

MA journalist Altıntaş taken into custody in Adiyaman

ANF | 27 JANUARY 2024

Mezopotamya Agency (MA) reporter Mahmut Altıntaş was taken into custody in the morning in Adiyaman (Semsûr).

The journalist was going to follow a news in the city's Yeni Mahalle, when the vehicle he was traveling in was stopped by the police. Altıntaş was taken into custody and brought to the Provincial Security Directorate on the grounds that there was a detention warrant against him.

No other information was given to the people who were with Altıntaş in the car.



Prison sentence for TTB President Fincancı upheld

ANF | ISTANBUL | 27 JANUARY 2024

The 2nd Criminal Chamber of the Istanbul Regional Court of Appeal completed the appellate review of the sentence of 2 years 8 months and 15 days of imprisonment given to Turkish Medical Association (TTB) President Şebnem Korur Fincancı by the Istanbul 24th Heavy Penal Court for “making propaganda for an illegal organisation”.

Deciding that there was no procedural and substantive illegality in the judgement of the local court and that there was no deficiency in the evidence and procedures, the chamber pointed out that the evaluation in terms of proof was appropriate. Arguing that the action was correctly characterised and the imprisonment sentence of 2 years, 8 months and 15 days was handed out within the legal context, the chamber rejected the appeal on the merits by rejecting the reasons put forward by the defendant's lawyers and the public prosecutor.

Background

The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on October 20 opened an investigation against Fincancı because of her comments on a [video](#) published by ANF on October 18, showing two PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) members suffering from a chemical attack in Iraq's Kurdistan Region.

The substance of the investigation, accusing Fincancı of “propagandizing for a terrorist organization” and “publicly degrading the Turkish Nation, the state of the Republic of Turkey and its institutions”, is constituted by Fincancı's comments to Medya Haber. The head of TTB stated that the involuntary movements of the people seen in the video could occur with the effect of a chemical getting hold of the nervous system and that an effective investigation should be carried out in relation to this if there are allegations that a chemical was used.

Regarding the investigation, Korur Fincancı told Bianet, “If there are such allegations, they should have allowed an effective investigation into the incident. Opening an investigation against the one who is saying ‘an investigation should be made’ gives the impression of concealing a crime. We also know why such an investigation was opened. They want no doctor to talk about these issues again. This investigation is an attempt towards intimidating and silencing people.”

“However, I proved many times that I will not keep silent, therefore I do not think that this investigation is targeting me. This investigation is meant to be an intimidation for the whole society. Great misfortune for Turkey,” Fincancı noted.

The head of the Turkish Medical Association added, “In any case, what needs to be done in this kind of a situation is to request an effective investigation. They should have started an effective investigation and proven that they have not used any chemicals instead of opening an investigation against me.”

The trial provoked international protest. Five UN Special Rapporteurs called on Turkey in early November to release the arrested President of the Medical Association immediately and not to use anti-terror laws as a means of intimidation. Similar statements were made by IPPNW, the World Medical Association and numerous other organisations. The German Medical Association also called for Fincancı's release. Its president, Klaus Reinhardt, called for the case to be dropped and said that doctors should intervene if there is a suspicion of human rights violations.

Şebnem Korur Fincancı was born in Istanbul in 1959. She is a renowned forensic scientist and chairperson of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) and a board member of the Human Rights Foundation in Turkey (TIHV). In 2018, she was awarded the Hessian Peace Prize. Before her arrest, she spoke about the human rights situation in Turkey at the Concerned Persons Conference in Cologne. Despite a lynching campaign instigated against her because of her demand for an independent investigation into chemical weapons attacks by the Turkish army, she subsequently returned to Istanbul and was arrested. She had previously informed the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office through her legal counsel that she was willing to testify in the criminal proceedings against her. It is largely thanks to her courage that the Turkish war crimes in Kurdistan have become an international issue.

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Civilians targeted by Turkey tell their living conditions without electricity and water

NUJIYAN ADAR | QAMISHLO | 28 JANUARY 2024

More than 6,500 families live in the Qudurbeq district of Qamishlo. There are seven municipalities, eight bakeries and a school in the district. Electricity and water supplies have collapsed since Turkey's last wave of attacks. ANF spoke to two women from Qudurbeq about their current living conditions.

Suheyla Şukri is a member of the PYD party and said that the Turkish state's attacks are not only directed against one people, but against the entire population of the autonomous region of Northern and Eastern Syria. She said: “The infrastructure for electricity, water and fuel was attacked. There is neither electricity nor water in the houses. Hospitals and schools were bombed. Massacres are being carried out. People should be displaced, but we have thwarted this policy. Our people will never leave the land in which they were born and raised. Our living conditions may be difficult, and people are aware that things can become even more difficult. But their will is strong. After the attacks, we no longer have any water, but the local government supplies the population with water tankers. We will not give up our country even without wa-

ter and bread. After the occupation of Afrin, Girê Spî and Serêkaniye, we will not allow another city to be occupied. Our people have created a basis for their existence with their own resources and have gone through difficult processes to this day. The Turkish state is bombing the population's livelihoods."

Ill and scared children

Suheyla Şukri pointed out that there are children and the elderly in every family: "Water and fuel are a very serious problem. The cold weather is particularly difficult for children and older people. Many fell ill. The children are scared. School classes had to be suspended because schools are constantly being attacked. The children stay behind at school. Our old people already have more than one health problem. How will they live without a stove in this cold weather?"

The international powers are silent

Şukri added: "The Autonomous Administration has always supported the population. People also help each other. The peoples of Northern and Eastern Syria have seen through the policies of the Turkish state. People protect each other, they don't leave anyone alone in difficult days. The international powers are silent because they are partners in the attacks carried out by the Turkish state. Institutions and organizations that supposedly defend human rights remain silent about the massacres of the population. The region's infrastructure is the basis of people's livelihoods. If the states present here remain silent, they should withdraw from our country. Our people do no harm to anyone. The people here just got their rights and want to live freely. Anyone who remains silent about this is no different from ISIS and is on their side. Our people must be united and fight on as one fist, with one voice."

Behiye Hesên, who also lives in Qudurbeq, asked: "What damage have electricity, water, diesel oil, printing houses and bakeries caused to the Turkish state? The places that were attacked were the people's livelihood. Now there is no electricity or water. Turkey calls itself muslim, but how is that compatible with Islam? Our neighbours are very old. We put in a new power line for them. This will stop when the diesel runs out. Our apartment gets electricity via a line from other neighbours. If they hadn't shared their electricity with us, our lives would be much more difficult now. If Turkey was muslim, it would not attack people and leave them without food and water. How are people supposed to survive in cold weather without diesel? Anyone who still has diesel will use it all and will no longer be able to find fuel."

Without diesel, there is no electricity and no well water

Hesên continued: "If we don't keep our home clean and don't shower, we get ill. Water is a source of life. Our neighbours have a well. To get water from the well, we rely on a generator. If the diesel runs out, things get very bad. There are many ill people. People who need dialysis treatment are in mortal danger. These people need clean water, and then the dialysis center was bombed. They cannot be treated. Our people are being killed."

Either we die together or we live free together

Hesên added: "Shops are closed because they have no electricity. The tailor shops cannot work because of the electricity problem. Children cannot go to school. How are children supposed to know what war is? They constantly ask about school and don't make any progress in their learning. They are scared because

we basically live in the dark. They want to watch TV, but we can't turn it on. The attacks have had a negative impact on children in every way. The Turkish state is targeting the entire population, children and the elderly. The Arab, Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenian and Circassian people will overcome these difficult days together. Our slogan is: Either we die together or we live free together. We have come together, we will not leave our country, even if we are thirsty or hungry, until we free our country from the mercenaries.”

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Journalist Altıntaş taken into custody again

ANF | ADIYAMAN | 29 JANUARY 2024

Journalist Mahmut Altıntaş, who was arrested on Saturday in Adıyaman (Semsûr), was taken into custody again after several hours of police detention and court-ordered reporting requirements.

According to the Mezopotamya (MA) news agency, for which Altıntaş works, the basis for the second arrest was a complaint from an officer from the anti-terror police TEM. The police officer claimed that he and other colleagues had been beaten by the journalist. The journalist is also said to have tried to escape. “A construct of lies,” explained Altıntaş, rejecting the allegations.

The incident is said to have taken place on Saturday on the premises of the Adıyaman Palace of Justice, when Altıntaş was taken to the public prosecutor's office for questioning after his first arrest. “The problem with the story is that our journalist was handcuffed at the time he allegedly beat up several police officers,” MA explained, adding: “His hands were tied with metal rings in front of his body. Furthermore, it was Mahmut Altıntaş who was a victim of violence. He was harassed and attacked by five police officers. The court's surveillance cameras captured the scene.”

Altıntaş was on his way to a report on Saturday in the center of Adıyaman, a province in the Kurdish southeast of the country that was badly shaken by the earthquake about a year ago, when the car he was in was stopped by police. The journalist was taken to the city's police headquarters on the grounds that there was an order to arrest him. Those accompanying him were not informed of the reason for the arrest.

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Can Atalay stripped of his MP status

ANF | ANKARA | 31 JANUARY 2024

Despite two rulings from the Constitutional Court declaring a violation of rights, Turkey's Worker's Party (TIP) Hatay MP Can Atalay, was not released. He faced a decision from the 3rd Criminal Division of the Court of Cassation, which was announced during the General Assembly of the Parliament on Tuesday.

AKP Group MP chair Bekir Bozdağ read out the decision, and following its announcement, Atalay was stripped of his parliamentary status.

DEM Party: Comply with the Constitution

Speaking during the debate, DEM Party parliamentary group chair Gülüstan Kılıç Koçyiğit strongly protested the attempt to read the decision to revoke Atalay's membership.

Koçyiğit said: “A coup is being staged against the will of the people here. Where is the Parliament Speaker? You are violating the Constitution. You are saying you don't recognize the Constitution. When we speak Kurdish, you remind us of the internal regulations. We reject establishing an order that will not even be a state of law, let alone a rule of law. We invite you once again to comply with the Constitution.”

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Campbell: We will appeal to a higher court

ANF | LONDON | 31 JANUARY 2024

The final hearing of the case filed against Irish journalist Mark Campbell and Kurdish women activist Beritan Slemani took place in London on Tuesday. The court found Campbell and Slemani guilty. They were accused of “displaying a flag in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion that they were members of a proscribed organisation, namely the PKK, contrary to section 13(1) and (3) of the Terrorism Act 2000.”

Human rights defender Margaret Oven and a group of members of the Kurdish People's Assembly also attended the hearing to support Campbell and Beritan.

At the end of the hearing, Mark Campbell told ANF: “During our two-day trial we won all the arguments in court giving the context of de-proscription and decriminalisation of the Kurdish movement in relation to holding the flags. The judge seemed to accept our arguments but, sadly, in his verdict, he seemed not confident enough to challenge the government's policy which is designed in favour of Turkey. So, we now have laws in this country that are politicised in favour of one of the world's worst human rights abusers.”

Campbell added: “We will be lodging an appeal to a higher court and a more experienced judge immediately and continue to campaign for the decriminalisation of the Kurdish movement which would open a way for conflict resolution of the war between the PKK and the Turkish state.”

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Iran does not hand over the bodies of 4 executed Kurds to their families

ANF | 30 JANUARY 2024

Kurdish political prisoners Pejman Fatehi (28 years old), Mohsen Mazloum (27 years old), Vafa Azarbar (26 years old) and Mohammad Faramarzi (28 years old) were executed in Iran on 29 January after 18 months in prison.

According to the reports in Eastern Kurdistan media, the Iranian regime buried the bodies of the executed Kurds in an unknown place and told their families not to wait for the bodies.

After the execution of 4 Kurds, harsh reactions against the Iranian regime developed in four parts of Kurdistan and many countries of the world.

Background

The four political prisoners met with their families for the first and last time on Sunday. Then, the 4 prisoners were taken from Evin Prison to Ghezel Hesar Prison in Karaj and were executed.

The execution was preceded by an odyssey of torture and human rights violations. The four activists “disappeared” a year and a half ago. They were abducted by the Iranian Secret Service from the eastern Kurdish metropolis of Urmia in July 2022. Since then, there has been no sign of life from them.

On 12 October 2022, the relatives of those abducted were horrified to see the detainees reciting “confessions” on Iranian television. The four were clearly badly marked by torture. Although the Komala organization denied that the four men had planned a bomb attack in Isfahan, that no weapons or explosives were found on them and that they had not engaged in espionage but had been politically active for the left-wing movement, they were sentenced to death without evidence.

Legal representation was not permitted in the proceedings. Every appeal was rejected and so the four men in their late 20s were executed on Monday morning.

The Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran (CFPPI) expressed deep concerns about the upcoming visit of Ms Al Nashif, the deputy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), to Iran from 3 to 5 February. Similar concerns have been echoed by various human rights advocates.

Despite the persistent daily executions and well-documented human rights violations by the Islamic regime in Iran, this visit risks inadvertently legitimizing a regime with a history of crimes against humanity, said the CFPPI.

Journalist Ehmed: 100 days incommunicado

ANF | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

Journalist Silêman Ehmed, who worked for the Arabic-language editorial office of RojNews in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, was arrested by the ruling KDP's security forces on 25 October and taken to an unknown location.

Today marks the 100th day of Ehmed's abduction and the authorities have not released any information about his condition or whereabouts. His lawyers have also been denied any contact.

The KDP Secret Service accuses the journalist, who comes from Rojava, of having links to the PKK. His arrest at the Sêmalka-Pêşxabûr border crossing between the Autonomous Region of North and East Syria and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) after a visit to his family in Aleppo was only confirmed by the Asayish (Local Security) in Duhok six days after the journalist's disappearance. RojNews describes the accusations against Silêman Ehmed as unsubstantiated allegations that have no connection to his five years of work as an editor.

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Peace in Kurdistan

Week of action for a political solution to the Kurdish question in North Kurdistan

ANF | AMED | 28 JANUARY 2024

Weeks of action for the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan and a political solution to the Kurdish question will take place in North Kurdistan in February. Politicians from the DEM and DBP parties announced at a press conference in Amed that from 1 to 15 February, demonstrations under the slogan "Time for Freedom" will be held in all cities of the Kurdish provinces in Turkey in order to break Öcalan's isolation, said DBP chair Keskin Bayindir.

Isolation as an instrument of social oppression

Öcalan was kidnapped from Kenya and brought to Turkey on 15 February 1999 by an international Secret Service action and has been on the prison island of Imralı for 25 years, where he is held incommunicado.

Bayindir said at the press conference that the Kurdish people see Öcalan as a crucial figure in the fight for equality, justice and freedom and the total isolation he is subjected to is illegal and inhumane. The aim of the week of action is to enforce the rights that all prisoners are entitled to under Turkish law and international standards.

Bayindir said: “The isolation system in İmralı is the center of the policy of extermination against the Kurdish people’s struggle for freedom. Absolute isolation means occupation, depopulation and colonization of the Kurdish region through war policies. In the current phase, it is not limited to the Kurds and Kurdistan, but has developed into an instrument of oppression and domination of the entire society.”

“Öcalan knows the Middle East very well”

DEM MP Sinan Çiftiyürek underlined the escalating conflicts in the Middle East and said: “Mr Öcalan has a lot to say, he understands the politics in the Middle East very well. If he could express his ideas and thoughts, he would speak out against war. The state does not want the Kurdish question to be resolved through democratic means. If it wanted to, it would lift Mr Öcalan’s isolation. We appeal to the state to abandon this immoral policy. Lift this isolation to solve the Kurdish question and the problems of the peoples of Turkey and the Middle East. Let Abdullah Öcalan speak.”

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‘Great Freedom March’ for a democratic solution and Öcalan’s freedom to start tomorrow

ANF | KARS | 31 JANUARY 2024

The ‘Great Freedom March’, which will be organised by democratic mass organisations and several institutions between 1-15 February to demand the physical freedom of Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan, will kick off from Kars and Van provinces. The march will be attended by 75 human rights activists and is expected to see mass participation, .

The march, one arm of which will start from Kars and one arm from Van, will end in the village of Amara in Urfa. After a statement to be made in Kars at 12.00 tomorrow, MPs and representatives of civil society organisations will visit shopkeepers and families during the day and give information about the isolation and the purpose of the march.

After the day-long visits, the delegation will set off for Dıgır and İğdır on 2 February. While preparations for the march are being finalised, the delegation is expected to gather in the evening and evaluate the final stage of the preparations.

DEM Party Co-Chair Tülay Hatimoğulları, who will take part in the Kars branch, called on all people to support the ‘Great Freedom March’.

Tülay Hatimoğulları, who arrived in Kars today, was welcomed by the party members. Addressing the people at the DEM Party's provincial building, Hatimoğulları reiterated that they will start a great march tomorrow to demand a democratic solution to the Kurdish question and an end to the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan.

Tülay Hatimoğulları said, “We are setting out for the resolution of the Kurdish question through democratic methods, for the freedom of Mr Öcalan and to break the isolation. We are starting this great march tomorrow from two points. The main purpose of our march is to support the hunger strike in prisons and the Justice Vigil started by our mothers outside. We have suffered a lot because the Kurdish question has not been solved. We will continue to do our best to ensure a peaceful democratic solution to the Kurdish question in parliament, in cities and on the streets. We call out here once again; we hope that a way will be opened before the hunger strikes turn into a bitter picture. This is why we are starting this freedom march. We call on all our people to show their support and solidarity.”



Great March for Freedom kicks off in Van

ANF | VAN | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

Political parties and democratic organizations are holding a “Great Freedom March” in Van (Wan) and Kars (Qers) today, demanding the removal of the isolation imposed on Abdullah Öcalan. The march is part of the international initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan, political solution to the Kurdish question”.

The march will kick off today and continue until 15 February, the day the Kurdish people's leader was captured in Kenya, 25 years ago.

Democratic Regions Party (DBP) co-chair Keskin Bayındır, People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) co-chair Tuncer Bakırhan and many representatives of civil society organizations attended the press statement. The marchers wore aprons with the words “Freedom March/Meşa Azadiyê ye” written on them.

DEM Party Şirnak MP Zeki Irmez said that the absolute isolation imposed in İmralı targets the Kurdish people's demands for democracy, freedom and justice.

Irmez underlined that the isolation in İmralı affects not only the Kurdish question but also the entire region and sabotages the common future of the people. He added that the İmralı isolation is the starting point of the lawlessness regime throughout Turkey.

The statement added that the İmralı isolation has become a tool of the regime ruling Turkey and has caused various problems by leaving the country breathless.

Irmez said that the gate of İmralı has been locked for the whole of Turkey and that there is where the key to a democratic future is.

The speakers said that the Great Freedom March would end the İmralı isolation, bring peace to the country and the region, and fight for a democratic Turkey.

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‘Great Freedom March’ in Kars: Our march will continue until Öcalan is freed

ANF | KARS | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

Democratic mass organisations and several institutions are organising a ‘Great Freedom March’ between 1-15 February to demand the physical freedom of Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan. The march kicked off from Kars and Van provinces today with the participation of dozens of human rights activists and politicians.

The Kars branch of the march started after a press statement participated by a large crowd including Peoples’ Democratic Congress (HDK) Co-Spokesperson Cengiz Çiçek, Democratic Regions Party (DBP) Co-Chair Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar, Peoples’ Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) Co-Chair Tülay Hatimoğulları and MED TUHAD-FED Co-Chair Kerem Canpolat.

People also supported the participants on their route through the city center. Party supporters and representatives of democratic mass organizations marched to the DEM Party Provincial Organization building where the group explained the purpose of the march to the gathered masses.

HDK Co-Spokesperson Cengiz Çiçek said, “The Kurdish question is a status issue. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure the physical freedom of Mr. Öcalan. This is not our choice, but our obligation. Up-risings have brought us to this day. We have to ensure this spirit. If a people rise up for their freedom, they will surely achieve their freedom. Victory belongs to those who take the road. We must increase this enthusiasm every day and go all the way to victory. The system wants to distract us from our agenda. In spite of genocide and colonialism, our agenda is Mr. Öcalan. Our march will continue until Mr. Öcalan meets the peoples under free conditions. The day of the meeting will be our day of freedom.”

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The ‘Great Freedom March’ in Northern Kurdistan continues: Open the gates of İmralı now

ANF | 2 FEBRUARY 2024

Democratic mass organisations and several institutions are organising a ‘Great Freedom March’ between 1-15 February to demand the physical freedom of Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan. The march

kicked off from Kars and Van provinces yesterday with the participation of dozens of human rights activists and politicians.

The march is taking place in the scope of days of action until 15 February, during which demonstrations, popular assemblies and commemorative events will take place in various cities. 15 February is the day of the capture of Abdullah Öcalan as a result of an international conspiracy in Kenya in 1999, when he was handed over to Turkey and has been held under an aggravated isolation system since.

A group of politicians and NGO representatives who started the action from Van continued their march in the province of Hakkari today. After a visit to Şemdinli, the group moved to Yüksekova, where they were met by a large crowd at the entrance to the town. A demonstration march was staged to the party building, where a people's meeting was held. Speaking here, DEM deputy Zeki Irmez said: "We are determined to break the isolation on İmralı with our freedom march."

DBP Chairman Keskin Bayındır gave a speech in which he referred to the long-standing resistance of the people of Gever and explained the background of the days of action: "The imperialist powers have only death, massacre and exploitation on their programme for the peoples of the four parts of Kurdistan and the Middle East. By isolating Mr Öcalan and the Kurdish movement, they want to make the hope for a new and free life disappear."

Stating that they started the march in a difficult process, Bayındır said, "Our march is for the Kurdish people and other peoples who want freedom. This war will always continue until the isolation in İmralı is broken and Mr Öcalan's freedom conditions are ensured. The Kurdish question must be resolved through negotiations and Mr Öcalan is the contact person for this. He is not far away, he is on İmralı. The gates of İmralı must be opened."

Bayındır's speech was repeatedly interrupted by chants of the slogan "Bijî Serok Apo" (Long Live Leader Öcalan) by those present.

Yüksekova co-mayoral candidate Şoreş Dirî pointed out that they will be in action until the isolation is lifted and said, "We will break this isolation together. Today, not only İmralı but also our cities are under isolation. The Freedom March will reach its goal."

The other co-mayoral candidate, Şadiye Kırmızıgül, said, "All our people should participate in this march. Enough is enough, all peoples in the Middle East are under isolation. Peoples want peace."

DEM Party Gever district co-chairs Ercan Sevmez and Filiz Saygı also greeted the marchers.

Peace Mother Gülbeyaz Mihçi called on all peoples to speak out against the aggravated isolation.

On the other hand, the group that started to march from Kars yesterday left the city in the morning and went to the Dağpınar town of Digor district.

Speaking here, DBP Co-Chair Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar pointed to the deadlock in the Kurdish question and said, "We know that this state policy that has been going on for a century has not yielded any results.

The state knows this best. With this freedom march, we are showing that a democratic solution to the Kurdish question is possible and that Mr Öcalan is the interlocutor.”

The group then travelled to Digor district. DEM Party MP Ömer Öcalan commemorated those who lost their lives in the Digor massacre. Ömer Öcalan drew attention to the isolation in İmralı and said, “All rights of Mr Öcalan have been trampled on. That is why we are here and our aim is to lift the isolation and solve the Kurdish question, for which the only interlocutor is Mr Öcalan. Our struggle will continue until his freedom is achieved. Our position is legitimate. You are the ones who are not legitimate, who do not recognise the law, who persecute. Follow your laws and get out of our way. Everyone is a witness to your oppression. The people of Digor know about the meeting Mr Öcalan held here. Digor gave its life in the most troublesome days, but did not bow its head down.”

Ömer Öcalan continued: “We want no one to die anymore and we want an honourable peace. Only Mr Öcalan can provide this peace. Our people are aware of everything. We will continue to march for our people and our leader. Open the gates of İmralı now. Let this country turn into a rose garden.”

After the statement, the group walked through the centre of the district chanting slogans saluting the resistance of Öcalan and the political prisoners on hunger strike for his freedom.

People in the neighbourhood embraced the group with applause and slogans. After the one-hour march, carnations were left at the place where the Digor massacre took place.

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Interview

Muslim: Leaving the relations between ISIS and Turkey as they are is playing with fire

NUJIYAN ADAR | HESEKE | 27 JANUARY 2024

Following the Turkish state's attacks in Northern and Eastern Syria, ISIS's mobility in the Middle East and the region increased. ANF asked Democratic Union Party (PYD) co-chair Salih Muslim about the connection between the Turkish state and ISIS.

With the increasingly heated conflict and war environment in the Middle East, ISIS is coming to the fore again. ISIS recently claimed responsibility for the attack in Iran. How do you evaluate this?

Various states use ISIS as a tool for their own interests. However, one of the countries that uses ISIS the most is Turkey. Turkey has constantly used ISIS for its purposes and to destroy the Kurdish people. For this reason, it released ISIS into Kurdistan. It unleashed ISIS on the Kurdish people in Shengal, Maxmur,

Hewlêr and Kobanê. ISIS was defeated in Kobanê and even its rule ended in Deir ez-Zor, but Turkey still puts ISIS forward to this day. ISIS ideology cannot be easily destroyed. ISIS still exists in some areas. They take action when they need it. During the initial organization process of ISIS, Turkey placed its own men within ISIS. One of them was Abu Muslim Turkmen. The other was Til Aferli, who was Baghdadi's assistant.

Turkey was handling all its affairs through this. It was used in Shengal, Rojava and Syria. The most burning example was their use of the Turkish Consulate in Mosul as ISIS Headquarters. So far, Turkey has not ended its ties with ISIS. Of course, Turkey does not mention this. It says that it is fighting against ISIS, but it is not true. Turkey definitely has a hand in the recent attack in Iran. Turkey also uses ISIS against the Kurdish people. It still organizes ISIS in Rojava. This was confirmed in the confessions of the captured ISIS members. The ISIS-Turkey relationship was documented in the last Xiwêran attack. It is known where they set out from and how they obtained military equipment. Turkish intelligence was directly involved. Turkey is the country that protects ISIS, feeds it and uses it for its purposes. As long as Turkey supports ISIS, the ISIS threat will not disappear.

In some news and analyses, it is said that ISIS has established a new organization based in Turkey and has organized the Khorasan region. How do you evaluate this, as someone who fought against ISIS the most and took part in a struggle that ended its geographical existence?

In order to develop and expand ISIS, they need to choose a people who can believe every word they say under the name of Islam, without knowing Islam. Khorasan region is suitable for this. Most of the ISIS members who came to Rojava included countries such as Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan. Therefore, it shows that Turkey has plans for Central Asia. It is based on plans such as opening up to Central Asia, expansion and developing friendship. Thus, they want to create complexity in these regions. Here too, Turkey supports ISIS. It may be called ISIS-Khorasan, but they are supported by Turkey.

ISIS's actions in the Middle East have increased recently. How should these actions be evaluated?

It is not possible to have peace and stability in a place where the shadow of ISIS exists. ISIS creates chaos and crisis. Deaths are increasing and the civil war is deepening. ISIS's foothold has constantly declined. It is dangerous for ISIS to become active in the Middle East. This means that the darker days will continue. Turkey is also blackmailing European countries by using ISIS for its own interests. The existence of ISIS in a country, especially in the Middle East, poses a danger not only to the people but also to the people of the world. In our fight against ISIS, what we constantly told the International Coalition, and still say, was, 'If you want to end the ISIS threat, you need to prevent those who support ISIS, you must prevent those who provide weapons, financial support and training to ISIS.' However, these forces acted in line with their own interests and turned a blind eye to Turkey, even though they knew that it was Turkey that supported ISIS.

You stated that international forces turned a blind eye even though they knew that ISIS was organized with support from Turkey. To which countries are you referring to?

Europe, Russia and America all know that Turkey backs and directly supports ISIS. The confessions of ISIS members arrested in these countries would have been sufficient proof of this. They made confessions proving how they crossed from Turkey to Rojava and their connections with Turkey. Yet they remain silent

against the Turkish state. Silence proves the existence of relationships established in line with different interests. There is connivance with each other in line with economic interests. At most, they may have put some conditions to Turkey, demanding that they would be under their control, that they should not come close to their countries, that they should massacre Kurds or Armenians or whoever they want.

It seems that Turkey has interests in different countries in its relationship with ISIS. They are already using ISIS in Turkey for their own interests. Huda-Par, which it founded in Kurdistan and supports, is also ISIS. Hûda-Par is the Kurds' ISIS. There are ISIS mercenaries where Turkey's shadow is. It also filled South Kurdistan with ISIS. If the Iraqi Government conducts research in the places where Turkey is located, it will be revealed that most of them are ISIS members. In other words, there is an organic relationship between Turkey and ISIS. Letting ISIS and Turkey relations run their course is playing with fire. It is not clear when and where the fire will burn. In other words, Turkey should be put to its place.

How is the mobility of ISIS mercenaries when the Turkish state's invasion attacks on the region increase?

The attacks are carried out to take revenge on ISIS. If we remember, when Manbij was liberated in 2016, Turkey and ISIS mercenaries reached an agreement in Jarablus. Raqqa was liberated. They occupied Afrin. They constantly wanted to take revenge for ISIS. In addition, all of the attacks on Sina Prison in Heseke in 2022 were planned by the Turkish state. They trained from outside, equipped them with military equipment, and organized from within to capture Heseke and expand the occupation. These situations were clearly revealed in the investigations. If we look at the attacks carried out by the Turkish state against the region so far, they are targeting and bombing wherever there is a prison where ISIS mercenaries are detained. The Turkish state hopes that ISIS will escape from prisons with these attacks. Turkey has plans that it wants to carry out through ISIS, and it wants to continue these plans. Their ideological perspectives are also the same. For this reason, the relationship between Turkey and ISIS is a dangerous one.

Is there anything you would like to add?

Massacres and genocides are being carried out against people by ISIS. Turkey may be telling some countries that they are using ISIS against the Kurds, but this is not true. The issue is not just about this. ISIS is also dangerous for the people of the world. If Turkey activates ISIS again to achieve its goals, this will revive ISIS again, just as it previously carried out explosions in France, the Netherlands, Germany and England. ISIS is like a ball of fire. Our hope is that everyone sees this truth and prevents Turkey's dirty games.

Following the Turkish state's attacks in Northern and Eastern Syria, ISIS's mobility in the Middle East and the region increased. ANF asked Democratic Union Party (PYD) co-chair Salih Muslim about the connection between the Turkish state and ISIS.

Karayılan: The Turkish regime imposes war and bloodshed, aiming to achieve results through killing

ANF | BEHDINAN | 27 JANUARY 2024

Murat Karayılan, Commander of the People's Defence Centre (HSM) Headquarters, spoke to ANF about the desperateness of the Turkish state in its war against the Kurdistan freedom forces in the guerrilla areas in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) and its efforts to cover up the deadlock it finds itself in.

We publish the third part of the in-depth interview with Karayılan below.

Historically, the Turkish state has an approach of concealing its losses in war. Very rarely has it been seen to announce its losses. Of course, looking at the statements made by the HPG, it is understood that it still hides most of its losses. What is the reason for the Turkish state's recent losses?

Yes, up to now they have always meticulously concealed their losses. There are undoubtedly many reasons why they have disclosed some of their losses in these recent actions. I can mention a few of them:

The first reason is that the number of casualties in the actions carried out in the last move is very high. When the number of casualties is so high, they are forced to publicise a few people. Because these bodies are taken to hospitals and morgues; from there they are delivered to other places, to their families. In other words, when there are too many, it becomes necessary to publicise them, even if only a few of them.

The Turkish army was able to take their bodies with the help of the KDP

In addition, the Turkish state could not take the bodies of the soldiers who died in these said actions by its own means. Only with the help of the KDP was it able to take the dead and wounded from Amediyê to Turkey. This was also the case in the two previous actions. In the last action, they were able to take the bodies with the help of the KDP. They even got the villagers involved. The villagers found the soldiers who had scattered and disappeared in the field, and handed them over to the KDP, who then handed them over to the Turkish troops. In other words, there is a picture that cannot be hidden. In that respect, they are forced to confess some things.

Again, in the action in Xakurkê, a soldier told his commander on the phone, "We have at least 6 losses, and there may be more", and this was posted on the internet. At first, they had announced 3 casualties; then they increased the number to 6. However, the number of casualties was not 6. The soldier who spoke on the phone had already said, "at least 6, which is what I saw". However, there were 27 casualties and those bodies remained there for 3 days. Only after 3 days were they able to take the wounded and dead from there. When such situations happen, they cannot hide it, and they have to announce some of them.

Trying to polish up MİT with false news

On the one hand, it hides its own casualties, and on the other, it resorts to false reports about guerrilla casualties...

Yes. In the current situation, the regime is not only lying to Turkish society and public opinion; it is also making many people liars along with itself. It is making almost all media organs and politicians in Turkey liars. Because the information it provides is not true, but false. Everyone repeats this wrong over and over again in their news and comments, saying “this is the official statement of our state”. Every time they suffer casualties, they create desktop news. For example, after the 12 January action, they also made news about our very valuable commander Peyman (Hülya Mercan), who had been martyred in 2019. However, comrade Peyman’s martyrdom had been announced by us long ago. Speeches and statements were made by our movement. Despite this, they reported that “MIT (Turkish intelligence service) destroyed one of their commanders in Metîna, where our soldiers died, in a retaliatory operation”. And all their channels reported this as breaking news. Not only this, the same is repeated for many other comrades of ours. With such false news, efforts are made to polish up the MİT. They are putting together false scenarios by saying “MİT found them and carried out an operation”. This shows their weakness, nothing else.

These actions of the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla caused the colonialist-genocidal Turkish Republic system to question the operations, especially the one they called Claw. There are also discussions about the withdrawal of the operations. In a past interview, you also said ‘either they will withdraw, or they will all die’. What would you say about these discussions on the agenda?

Firstly, I must say that we are a movement that keeps our word. Personally, I would not say something that cannot happen, that we do not aim and cannot do, just for propaganda. Those words I mentioned were said for the soldiers who came to Girê Amediyê in the middle of 2022. Later on, the Turkish army withdrew from Girê Amediyê and left, but in September 2023 it came back again. And this time it tended to become permanent. For this reason, the guerrilla tends towards that area. Our aim is not to kill more soldiers, on the contrary, it is to prevent bloodshed. We are certainly not responsible for these deaths. The ones responsible for this are those who have decided to continue the war to this extent and come all the way to Amediyê and want to develop a permanent occupation here. As comrade Abbas pointed out, the main responsible parties are Tayyip Erdoğan and Bahçeli.

There is also a wrong strategy applied in practice, the attitude of sacrificing soldiers. In other words, there are practical acts that risk losses, as if to say, ‘you are military contractors, you should die if necessary.’ Maybe they are not in a situation of extreme impossibility as stated in the Turkish press. They have a certain level of armament, but the practices of directing them to risky areas, risking losses, almost disregarding the life of the soldiers is a fact. In this regard, we have repeatedly seen in practice that some commanders sacrifice dozens of soldiers for their own personal careers.

We are not enemies of Turkey

The public opinion and people of Turkey should know that we are not enemies of Turkey. We are not enemies of the Turkish people at all. We are also waging this struggle on behalf of the people of Turkey. We do not want to break Turkey into pieces, we want to transform Turkey and turn it into a democratic country.

A democratic republic in which Kurdish and Turkish and all other cultures can live freely and fraternally is a fundamental goal. Leader Apo (Abdullah Öcalan) has made this clear. Leader Apo is the architect of the democratic republic strategy. It is the AKP-MHP regime that imposes war and bloodshed and aims to achieve results through killing.

Another thing is to empathise. Kurds are a people and want to exist. If Turkish, the language of Turkey, was to be banned today, wouldn't resistance be legitimate? This applies to every people. If a people's language and values are banned, the right to resist arises. The Kurdish people are also resisting on this basis. This must be recognised. On the other hand, Northern Kurdistan was not enough and now Southern Kurdistan is being occupied. You are in the position of an occupying power. You are not going to pick roses wherever you go, but to kill people. If you go to kill a man, you might even die. So those soldiers did not go up that mountain to ski in the snow. Therefore, those who implement this policy are responsible for these deaths. What was that soldier doing there? This is the question that should be asked.

In short, there is very intense disinformation. The truth is being distorted. The voice of the revolution, of course, cannot reach the whole society in Turkey. There is such a problem. Therefore, they are trying to engage and direct the society by arranging everything on the desktop as they wish. The reality is not like that. They are the ones who want war. What did Leader Apo say to his lawyers when they visited him a few times 5 years ago? "If I am given the opportunity, I will solve this issue within a week," he said. But despite this, why so much war, why so much material expenditure, why so many tanks, cannons and aircraft! Why are so many attacks being developed against the Kurdish people? How will they explain this in the face of history tomorrow?

Special warfare's search for foreign hands

There is also talk of continually putting forward foreign hands in the face of the rising guerrilla actions and basing these actions on the support of America, Israel, Iran and many other countries. The relations between the Rojava forces and the USA are constantly cited as an example. What do you think about these evaluations?

Yes. This is a generalised approach of the colonialist mindset of the Turkish state. In every period, they have always looked for an external finger to the Kurdish people's attempts to demand their rights. Whether so or not, they have always said "foreign powers". It is the same thing now. In the face of their own wrong strategy and the reality of defeat, they are looking for justification in the intervention of foreign powers. No, your strategy is wrong. You consider a whole society, a whole people as terrorists and want to destroy them. This is not possible; you cannot achieve it. But they insist on it. For example, they do the same thing in an effort to link our movement to drugs. For 45 years, the Turkish state authorities have been accusing us of drug-related offences. To date, there has never been a drug case against any PKK member in Turkey or anywhere else in the world. If it were as they say, there would be thousands of cases now, wouldn't there? But are there any at all? No. There may be some Kurdish citizens involved in various activities, but the PKK organisation's philosophy, morality and manners is based on the fight against all kinds of drugs. But despite this, they constantly make accusations based on this. These are all distortions of the facts.

We see many people with the word "Prof." in front of their names appear before the cameras and say "America, Israel, Iran are behind these actions". This is just outrageous. One can make sense of some spe-

cial war propagandists, but we see even some people we follow, who defend some truths, say the same things. In other words, they are saying that this is a project, that there are foreign powers behind it, etc. Is this the truth? No, it is not. It has nothing to do with it.

Yes, America may have a Kurdish project. More precisely, it is said to exist. But it is not clear what it is. But there is no PKK in it. America has not only put us on the terrorist list, but also put a bounty of millions of dollars on our heads. Moreover, for 40 years the Turkish state has been waging a war against us with the political, military and technical support of America and NATO. If there was no foreign support behind the Turkish state and army, this war would not have lasted this long. Because the interest of global capital is not in the solution of problems, but in their unsolvability. That is why they support it and why they are waging it.

Can Turkish UCAVs and aircraft enter so far into Iraq and Syria without America's approval? Not even a bird can fly in Iraq without America's permission. Is there anyone who doesn't know that there has been a cease of aerial bombardments in Southern Kurdistan for years? Are these attacks being carried out here without approval? The support of the USA is clear. America says, "I support you", but when they are in front of the screen, they forget all this and say the opposite. If the US really supported the SDF and other forces in Rojava, if it had the intention of developing a project through the forces there, as the Turkish media circles claim, could it have kept silent about the attacks of the Turkish state in Rojava, in Northern and Eastern Syria, which are trampling on the laws of war and are directed against the basic sources of life of people? It would have prevented it. It can prevent it if it wants to.

Yes, there is a relationship between the forces in Rojava and America, but the American officials themselves explain what this relationship is. SDF officials also emphasise it from time to time. But the Turkish state uses this as an excuse to claim that there are international powers behind the just Kurdish cause in a very brazen and persistent manner. However, what they want is for America to support them just like it supports Israel. In other words, they criticise America so much because it does not support them as it supports Israel. This is the essence of it, and it is very clear that it has nothing to do with us.

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‘AKP’s attacks on Rojava are a crime against humanity and can’t prevent the guerrillas’ just cause’

ANF | BEHDINAN | 28 JANUARY 2024

Murat Karayılan, Commander of the People's Defence Centre (HSM) Headquarters, spoke to ANF about the Turkish state's genocidal attacks against Rojava, the policy of the KDP cooperating with the Turkish state and the attacks on the values of the Kurdish people.

We publish the fourth and last part of the in-depth interview with Karayılan below.

No strong army would ever fall into such a despicable situation

After every revolutionary operation, the Turkish state bombards civilian living areas in Rojava and targets service institutions. On the other hand, it carries out political genocide operations in North Kurdistan. What do you say about these?

In the North, they arrest civilians, defenceless people, people sleeping at home, in midnight raids. They call this "Operation Heroes". They are making a profession out of mocking the truth. What's that got to do with it! You go to raid civilian people sleeping at home with so much military power and equipment. You arrest and harass people without charge. What does this have to do with heroism? This is not heroism, it is dishonour. However, they consider dishonour as heroism.

Likewise, their attacks on Rojava are unacceptable. Attacks against the sources of life of a society, especially attacks against hospitals, printing presses, bakeries, wheat warehouses, factories, are a violation of international laws of war. Such areas are civilian areas and are not targeted. Targeting these areas is an inhuman practice. 5 million people live there. What sense does it make to eliminate their livelihoods, to leave them without electricity and water? What does this have to do with humanity? It has nothing to do with it.

No powerful state or army can fall into such a despicable situation and do such a thing. This is a very cowardly and ugly form of attack. It is the attack style of the weak, not the strong. If you are brave, the place of those who fight you is clear, you fight with them. Go fight them. What does it mean to attack the civilian, defenceless people and their sources of life? It is clear that they are targeting Rojava to prevent the defeat from being revealed. If they think they can stop the guerrilla with such ugly attacks, they are wrong. These attacks have nothing to do with us, nor can they prevent the guerrillas' just cause and actions in this way. This is not possible.

AKP's attacks on Rojava are a crime against humanity

In the face of all these attacks, there is not much reaction from the international community. What can be said in this context?

This is also an interesting aspect of the issue. The Kurdish forces also have inadequacies and mistakes in this regard. There are inadequacies in making a good distinction between the parts, as well as the inadequacy of diplomatic work. The weak reflection of the Kurdish national reflex is also a matter of serious criticism. In short, there are dimensions that we Kurds should also highlight against these attacks. Again, there may be emotional approaches, inadequate and inaccurate reflections by some young structures. Each part is different; each part carries out its own struggle under its own concrete conditions. Just as a Marxist party in each country is not considered responsible for the practice of a Marxist party in another country, that is, in this sense, everyone is responsible for the practice in their own country's conditions, the PKK and the PYD have the same level of responsibility towards each other. What they have in common is their adoption of the Apoist ideology, but everyone is responsible for the practice in his own part. They have no organic ties with each other and cannot be held responsible for each other. However, I do not think that this truth has been reflected in exactly this way. Emotional approaches come to the fore and ideology and organisation are confused with each other.

However, the Turkish Republic deliberately shows and uses this situation differently. It makes it look as if there is an organic bond, as if they are one and the same. Even the name of our party PKK is constantly used in Rojava. They say, "We have dealt a heavy blow to the PKK's financial resources". What's that got to do with it? What are the PKK's financial resources there? This is a big lie, a distortion. Another new development of the AKP in Turkey is that it commits crimes and illegal practices not only in this issue but also in other general issues, but tries to legitimise them by openly publishing them in the press as if they were natural. In other words, it makes the crime look like it is not a crime. Thus, it aims to legitimise it.

The AKP's attacks on Rojava are a crime against humanity. It is mainly uncomfortable with the status of the Kurdish people and the peoples of Northern and Eastern Syria. In other words, it wants to abolish the Democratic Autonomous Administration. It is jealous of the peoples living together freely and sees that system as a danger to itself, so it attacks. For this reason, it is trying to create a connection with the guerrilla. It makes it look as if the PKK is stationed there. None of this has anything to do with reality. The main target there is status. It is an attack against the organisation of the Kurdish people to gain status. It wants to prevent the development of the system of the Democratic Autonomous Administration in this way. In other words, this is essentially an activity aimed at destroying the system there and displacing the Kurdish people. What does it have to do with the guerrilla? It has no connection at all. But what is important here is to reflect these facts correctly to the entire Kurdish people and public opinion and to develop the struggle against this with the right methods. For this, it is important to recognise and overcome the inadequacies.

KDP's partnership with AKP-MHP strengthens insolvency

Although you have stated many times that the Turkish state aims to liquidate the Kurds, it is seen that the KDP continues to act with the Turkish state on the battlefields. How does this situation reflect on the Kurdish people?

The level of the KDP's cooperation with the Turkish state is a serious problem and this cannot be defined as a problem between two organisations only. Now in Northern Kurdistan, our people are making a great sacrifice, effort and labour to enforce a solution to the Kurdish question on the Turkish state. We have around ten thousand revolutionary patriotic people imprisoned. There is oppression and torture in Northern Kurdistan; there is a system of isolation and torture on Leader Apo (Abdullah Öcalan) that is unrivalled in the world. Thousands of Kurdish politicians and Kurdish youth, whose only crime is to defend Kurdish identity, are wanted to rot in prisons. There is a great fascist violence and oppression against the people of the North. Our people are facing a much more deep-rooted violence than the fascist oppression of the Saddam era, and our people are resisting against it. Every day their children are martyred, and they are in great resistance with everything. The aim of all these efforts is to solve the Kurdish question. The solution of the Kurdish question is to make the Turkish state accept the solution, but the KDP's partnership with the AKP-MHP government, which conducts a notorious anti-Kurdish policy, strengthens the hand of insolvency, not the solution. Thus, it becomes an obstacle to a solution. In other words, this stance strengthens the hand of the fascist forces that seek a solution through violence and want to subject the Kurdish people to genocide.

Northern Kurdistan is half of Kurdistan. The lack of a solution here is something that also affects the future of the whole Kurdistan. If the genocide policy implemented by the AKP-MHP in Northern Kurdistan succeeds, all the gains and existence of the other parts will be under threat. This is a certain fact. There-

fore, the partnership of the KDP and the Turkish Republic is a national problem for the Kurds. Therefore, everyone who is in favour of Kurdish national rights should emphasise this, and no one should remain silent against it. Of course, everyone has something to do in this regard. Organisations such as the KNK, etc., which see themselves as responsible for the Kurdish cause, have something to do in this regard, they have responsibilities. For example, all political parties, non-governmental organisations and patriotic personalities who want to solve the Kurdish question in Northern Kurdistan and who are struggling for this purpose should wage a struggle to overcome this obstacle. It is wrong to be content with the occasional statements on this issue that have been seen in Northern organisations so far, or to remain in a spectator position. Everyone has something to do to make the KDP abandon this sinister policy that is against Kurdish national interests. Some can go and hold talks and warn; some can come and develop various activities in Southern Kurdistan and internationally. Because this policy jeopardises the interests of the entire Kurdish people. Although the fascist practices of the current regime acting on behalf of the Republic of Turkey are ostensibly shown as attacks and practices against the PKK, it is very clear that, in essence, it is an attack against the future of the entire Kurdish people. The Turkish state does not want the Kurdish people to have will and status in the region. It sees this as a serious threat to its existence. Although the situation is so clear, how can it be that a power in the name of Kurdishness co-operates with such a racist state, which is the enemy of the Kurds and Kurdistan, and helps them to occupy Kurdistan's lands? This grave situation should not be accepted by any patriot.

It should be well known that the Turkish state has never withdrawn from any place it has occupied throughout history. And there is no one who does not know that it is a secret strategy for the Turkish state to occupy the borders of Misak-ı Milli (National Pact). Despite this, why is the KDP making so much effort for the Turkish state to occupy the territory of Southern Kurdistan? Why does it provide so many opportunities for the Turkish state to settle in Girê Amediyê? Why does it carry out activities such as embargo, road blocking, denunciation, etc. in order to weaken and break the guerrilla resistance? It is not possible to understand this. No one knows what kind of secret agreement exists between them. This needs to be revealed. What kind of agreements have been made for the future of the Kurdish people, why can an organisation be a partner in the Turkish state's occupation of Kurdish lands in this way? These are important issues, and everyone must take their responsibilities in this regard and do whatever they can to eliminate the dangers to Kurdish national interests. It is everyone's national patriotic duty to take such a stance.

Freedom struggle keeps the memory of Şêx Saîd alive

The Turkish state is also making calculations to discredit, ignore and play on the past values of the Kurdish society. Most recently, there have been intense discussions about Şêx Saîd. The insults made in these discussions caused reactions among the Kurdish people. What do you say about this?

Yes, Şêx Saîd is a value of the people of Kurdistan that has a place in the history of the Kurdish people. Insulting Şêx Saîd is an insult against the entire Kurdish people. Although the Turkish state tries to overlook it, it is clearly evident in the available historical documents. The Kurds are a people who have laboured in the establishment of the new Turkey. It participated in the war, suffered martyrs and is a founding element. Until 1924, there was a certain level of Kurdish-Turkish co-operation. In this regard, the Kurds were promised autonomy. But with the 1924 Constitution, the existence and rights of the Kurds were denied, the promises made to the Kurds were not fulfilled, and the Kurdish people were betrayed. Here, it is not Şêx Saîd who betrayed, but Şêx Saîd and the entire Kurdish people who were betrayed.

As a Kurdish leader, Şêx Saîd was an honest and sincere person in his life. He was not a leader of the movement. He was a member of the Azadî Committee. However, when people like Xalid Cibranî and Yusuf Ziya were arrested and the Kurdish people faced a great injustice, Şêx Saîd had to shoulder the burden. He did not avoid it, he made sacrifices. He tried to embrace the Kurdish freedom cause. After the first meeting they held, soldiers sent in front of a group made a provocation, which led to a premature birth. The Turkish state came upon them without the necessary preparations. This is what was done here. Therefore, it is clear that these situations cannot be seen correctly without seeing the just truth of the Kurdish cause. Şêx Saîd is an important figure in the struggle for the Kurdish national cause, and today, in the freedom struggle that is being raised, the memories of Şêx Saîd, Seyit Rıza, İhsan Nuri Pasha and their likes are kept alive and their goals are realised.

Moreover, the fact that Şêx Saîd mentioned the caliphate in his statement was not something that could be considered abnormal at that time. The caliphate had just been abolished and a significant part of the newly formed state cadres, including the leadership, still defended the caliphate. There is also information that the suggestions of an officer assigned by the state played an important role in making such a statement. Therefore, it is clear that those who make interpretations and conclusions based solely on this statement are acting deliberately.



Ramon Mantovani tells of Öcalan's days in Rome - Part One

SERKAN DEMIREL | ROME | 30 JANUARY 2024

As a Kurdish friend, you accompanied Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan on the plane from Russia to Italy. You were a member of the Italian Foreign Affairs Commission at the time. Was the Italian government aware of this situation? Did Öcalan come to Italy upon an invitation? Can you tell us a little bit about how this process developed?

My party (Communist Refoundation Party), since its birth in 1991 was and has always been in solidarity with the Kurdish cause.

A year before Öcalan's arrival in Italy, the PKK contacted me to ask me to develop some parliamentary initiative, useful for supporting a new course of the Kurdish struggle consisting of a unilateral ceasefire and the prospect of a negotiation to resolve the conflict through negotiation of peace.

On 10 December 1997, the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic voted on my resolution, which was also discussed and signed by other deputies of other political groups, and unified in the dispositive part with another resolution of the National Alliance group, of which I accepted to include in mine only the last point regarding the prospect of an independent Kurdish state. It is worth remembering that, from a constitutional point of view, in Italy a resolution approved by a Commission or by the Assembly of the Chamber of Deputies or Senate is a document that represents the official position of Parliament, which is the supreme body of popular sovereignty. The Government has the duty to comply in its executive activity with the indications contained in the dispositive part of the resolutions.

Therefore, for the first (and unfortunately only) time, a European Union state took a position on the Kurdish issue, denouncing the existence of an armed conflict, the violations of international law by the Turkish army's invasion of Iraq, the violations of human beings of the Kurdish populations, and indicated to his government to undertake initiatives to reach a political and negotiated solution to the conflict.

A few weeks after the approval of the resolution, the Minister of the Interior at the time, Giorgio Napolitano, responding to the protests from the *Forza Italia* group about the granting, by the Italian authorities, of refugee status to Kurdish citizens with Turkish passports, said that he was required to do so following the approval of the resolution of the Foreign Affairs Commission.

Some time later and following this initiative, which was obviously hailed by the PKK as a great success, President Öcalan told me that he was interested in meeting a delegation from our party.

In September 1998 a delegation composed of me, MP Walter De Cesaris and the Head of Peace Processes of the party's Foreign Department, Alfio Nicotra, met President Ocalan in the Middle East.

The meeting was important for us and for Öcalan because we verified that our relations could go well beyond the traditional solidarity between left-wing political forces. We discovered that we had the same interest and concern for the negative innovations of capitalist globalization, that we thought that revolutionary forces had to think and act unitedly in the world and not limit themselves to relations of simple solidarity, that we considered peace and the negotiated solution of armed conflicts in the world as the only way to address and resolve international disputes, and also internal disputes in countries that did not recognize the existence and rights of their national minorities. Above all, we agreed that we had a problem in common. The possible entry of Turkey into the EU without the resolution of the conflict with the Kurdish people would have even more accentuated the antidemocratic and technocratic nature of the EU and vice versa the prospect of a peace process in Turkey would have been strengthened as a precondition for Turkey's entry in the EU.

The meeting was made public by my party's newspaper, "*Liberazione*", which gave it wide coverage.

What happened during your meeting with Öcalan and what topics did you discuss with Öcalan on the plane? What was the reason for Öcalan's visit to Europe, in your opinion?

I learned about President Öcalan's expulsion from Syria from the international press. Shortly thereafter, I was informed by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation of Öcalan's presence in Russia and of the possibility that the Duma would discuss the case and decide in favor of granting political asylum.

I knew nothing more until the late evening of 10 November 1998 when I was informed, by Kurdish leaders present in Italy, that President Öcalan was in danger in Russia as part of the government and part of the intelligence apparatus intended to hand him over to Turkey. And they told me that the President had decided to come to Italy although, he also had other alternatives, both because the Italian Parliament had had the most advanced position on the Kurdish question, and because he wanted to launch an appeal and a proposal for peace negotiations in a country of the EU, of NATO and with an important tradition of promotion and involvement in peace processes.

We immediately worked to help the President achieve his goal of coming to Italy and obtaining political refugee status. Evidently, we explored and turned to all the institutions and apparatus that were useful in some way to ensure that everything happened in the best possible way.

I will not give more details on our institutional contacts in Italy and with other countries.

It wasn't easy, for many reasons. Turkey would have protested and taken reprisals, as it had already done after the approval of the resolution at the beginning of the year. There was an international arrest warrant against Öcalan of Germany, in addition to the Turkish ones. And it was clear from the beginning that as soon as he arrived in Italy, the President would be arrested, mainly due to the German arrest warrant, and that Italy would have to respond positively to Germany's request for extradition.

Despite all the difficulties, which were many, we managed to prepare the conditions for the President to travel to Italy.

In the end, I, accompanied by a Kurdish friend, went to Moscow where I met President Öcalan at the same airport, in a basement of military offices manned by Russian intelligence agents. I explained to him the Italian situation and what would happen. He would have been arrested but not sent to prison but rather to a hospital due to the health problems he had, and in a few days, as per practice, a magistrate would certainly have set him free pending a possible extradition request from Germany. Obviously, I told him, if he had other alternatives, to consider them because no matter how much effort we had made, Italy being a country with de facto limited sovereignty, Turkey's pressure on the US and on Italy, notoriously subordinate to the US, could have led to situations unexpected at any time.

He told me that he was determined to come to Italy, even if he had other alternatives, because he wanted to transform a difficulty into an opportunity, precisely by coming to a country like Italy, also home to the Vatican and therefore known very well throughout the world, to launch the proposal for peace negotiations, without any longer indicating an independent Kurdish state as the objective of a possible negotiation. He added that he had no problem with being extradited to Germany, as he considered that the charges against him were completely inconsistent and that he would be right in any trial.

So we took the first flight to Rome.

On the plane we talked about politics. I explained to him the new Italian situation, with a government presided over by D'Alema, as the previous one led by Prodi had fallen due to the rift between us and the government, and our opposition to the new government. But we also talked about less important and pleasant things like Italian and Turkish football.

A very important detail, as I will explain later, were my instructions on what to do upon arrival. I said that the best thing would be the following: The President, with his secretary and the Kurd who had traveled with me and who spoke Italian, would have to go to the border crossing reserved for diplomats, and identify themselves by asking for political asylum. The others who accompanied him (4 or 5 people in total) and myself would have passed the normal border post. I would not have accompanied the President to the diplomatic passage, despite having a service passport as a deputy, because we had considered that our entire role as a party in the affair remained confidential, in order to prevent the relevance of the presence in

Italy and the message of peace of the President would be overshadowed by the small provincial controversies in Italian politics that would certainly have ignited if our involvement had been known.

Everything went as we had planned. The President asked for asylum, was arrested and was led away by a group of policemen, together with his secretary and the Kurd who had acted as a translator. He was taken to a hospital outside Rome. He was assisted by two important lawyers (Giuliano Pisapia and Luigi Saraceni, both deputies of the Italian Republic), and a few days later a magistrate set him free. The office of the Kurds in Italy, with the help of the Italian intelligence services, given the security problems that would have arisen, rented a small villa on the outskirts of Rome which would then be Öcalan's residence until his departure, guarded by the maximum deployment of the Italian special forces, who even installed tools to foil a missile attack.

What was the attitude of the then Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema towards Öcalan's visit to Italy? What happened diplomatically during Öcalan's stay in Italy?

The President of the Italian government held a position that we can define as cold and distant towards Öcalan and more generally towards the Kurdish cause. And this is understandable given Italy's international position and the large trade exchanges with Turkey, especially in the military sector, as Italy is a leading supplier for Turkey. In a parliamentary debate, responding to attacks from right-wing parties, he defended the correctness and legality of the actions of the Italian institutions, which had arrested Öcalan as he was being chased by a German arrest warrant and who had taken note of his asylum request formulated at the time of arrest. But he didn't say something that we only discovered several weeks later when I received a notice from the judiciary as being under investigation for the crime of aiding and abetting illegal entry. The police report relating to Öcalan's arrival was false. It was written that Öcalan had attempted to cross the border with a false document and that, once recognized, he had been arrested. I was then acquitted of the accusation for the simple reason that in the interrogation they gave me I explained that President Öcalan had turned to the passage of diplomatic passports at the airport, accompanied by his secretary and a Kurd resident in Italy, and that such behavior was absolutely incompatible with the attempt to cross the border with false documents. And I asked the magistrates to verify it by viewing the videos recorded by the airport security cameras. To my surprise, the magistrate who was questioning me concluded the interrogation by saying that he believed me also because the recordings of the hours of our arrival at the airport had "mysteriously" disappeared.

All this to say that the President of the government, Massimo D'Alema, behaved seriously incorrectly from an institutional point of view, given that the order to falsify the minutes relating to Öcalan's arrival, even if it was not officially issued by him, could not have been unknown to him. And if the head of government had been kept in the dark about such a violation of legality, once he learned the truth, he would have had to identify and prosecute any state officials who were unfaithful to the Italian Republic and obedient to foreign services. Which obviously never happened.

Do you think there was pressure on the Italian government to get Öcalan out of Italy? Which countries put such political pressure on Italy?

The Turkish government led by Ecevit canceled numerous military and civil contracts worth billions of euros, recalled the ambassador for consultations, and unleashed a campaign against Italy and the Italian government. And he asked for Öcalan's extradition to Turkey.

I understand that D'Alema privately but also publicly insisted strongly on Germany requesting Öcalan's extradition. Which Germany never did.

The US government, through Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, publicly asked Italy to extradite Öcalan to Turkey. In addition to being a very serious interference in affairs that did not concern the US but only Italy and Turkey, this request was even more serious because the US asked the Italian government to violate the laws of its own country, which prevented extraditing a prisoner to a country where he could be sentenced to the death penalty. Something that the US government could not ignore also because of the sole fact that never, and these are several cases, has Italy satisfied the request for the extradition of US citizens subject to a death sentence in the US, precisely for this reason. If it got to the point of making public pressure of this type, one can imagine how much pressure was made in private. One of these was to bring out the news of my activity for President Öcalan's visit to Italy. It was the American intelligence services that released the news in Greece, according to which there were an Italian deputy and two Greek deputies on the plane with Öcalan. Fake news because it was only me but useful enough to ensure that the Italian press went wild looking for the "culprit". A few months earlier, my party's newspaper had published an account of our meetings with Öcalan in the Middle East, complete with photographs, and several journalists began trying to get confirmation of their suspicions from me or from the party. Furthermore, I was informed by a right-wing MP that Silvio Berlusconi had called a press conference on internal political topics, during which he would point to me as the "culprit" of having "brought" a terrorist to Italy (the PKK was not, at the time, even on the list of terrorist organizations of the EU), of having caused very serious economic damage to the country and of having created a serious diplomatic crisis between two allied countries such as Italy and Turkey. Therefore, on 25 November 1998, I was forced to call a press conference before Berlusconi in which I said that I had indeed, at his request, helped Öcalan come to Italy to ask for asylum, proclaim a unilateral ceasefire and propose a peace negotiation to Turkey. As predictable, the usual pseudo-political brawl broke out and the vast majority of newspapers and TV said that I had "brought" Öcalan to Italy to damage the government, the country and so on. For once, D'Alema said something that was completely acceptable. He declared: "Öcalan doesn't seem like a person who needs to be brought by anyone". How could one disagree! The leader of a population of tens of millions of people, head of a guerrilla war that since the beginning of the 80s had stood up to the strongest NATO army after the US one, according to many Italian journalists and exponents of right-wing parties and also of the center-left, as ignorant as they are biased, would have needed to be "brought" by me to Italy to spite the government!

Öcalan was forced to leave Italy despite his request for political asylum. He was later arrested in Kenya. In his later statements about his arrest, Öcalan described it as an international conspiracy against him. What do you think about this?

There is no doubt that various subjects, starting with powers such as the US, multinationals interested in continuing the exploitation of Kurdistan's resources, political party friends of Turkey (we must not forget that Ecevit was the head of a party of the Socialist International), large public and private armaments industries that had Turkey as an important customer, etc. acted, even collaborating with each other, to prevent the PKK's peace proposal from becoming practicable. From this point of view, I completely agree with the President.

As far as Italy is concerned, the public and confidential pressures from the US government that I spoke about before were accompanied by pressure on the D'Alema government coming from the highest levels

of the Italian security apparatus, more faithful to the orders of the US than to those of their own government. Anyone who knows the history of the Italian Republic well knows, as has been proven in various criminal trials, that the state apparatus participated in collaboration with the CIA in the 60s, 70s and even 80s in the preparation and cover-up of terrorist attacks aimed at preventing the rise of the Italian Communist Party in government. It is therefore not surprising that, even in this circumstance, the CIA used "its" men at the top of the Italian security apparatus.

After the pressure that the Italian government received, the men who maintained relations with Öcalan on behalf of the D'Alema government exerted numerous pressures directly on Öcalan to make him leave the country. They did it by saying something true. That is, one minute after Italy had responded negatively to the extradition request to Turkey, pursuant to a collaboration treaty against terrorism between Italy and Turkey stipulated in the 1970s and never revoked after the 1980 coup d'état in Turkey, any Italian judge could have arrested Öcalan and subjected him to trial on the charges brought against him by the Turkish judiciary. And they even did so by threatening to remove the protection that had been organized by the special forces of the Italian police force.

As regards the arrest and the possible trial, the lawyers argued that with the generic accusations and without the accusation of any specific and personal blood crime, provisional freedom and acquittal in the trial would have been certain. As for the threats to withdraw protection, I explained that it was a bluff, because if they had done so we would have denounced it publicly and whatever happened to Öcalan would have brought those responsible to court and then to prison.

I spoke at length with the President, explaining to him, like the lawyers, that the arrest would be short and that the trial would be favorable to acquittal. I didn't give advice to him because I understood that it was a decision that fell solely to him and the PKK. But even if I had been asked for a direct opinion, I would not have been able to give any, not knowing the possible alternatives that the PKK had certainly been working on.

In any case, there was a long discussion during which Öcalan insisted on something that does him great credit. Before his personal safety and salvation, he highlighted the fact that a possible arrest of him, and therefore failure of the negotiation proposal, would have been interpreted by the Kurdish people as a definitive defeat and would certainly have fueled desperate tendencies and actions. For this reason, he was inclined to leave Italy and look for an alternative. After my conversation with the President, leading exponents of the PKK asked me for a meeting in which they told me that, given our fraternal relations, they let me know that the PKK was inclined to allow the President to remain in Italy, on the understanding that the last word would be his. At that point, I told them that if they considered it useful they could tell the President that my party also thought, like the PKK, that the best thing was for him to stay in Italy.

I know what happened after the departure of the President, requested and favored by the D'Alema government, only because it was reported to me by PKK leaders later, but neither I nor anyone from my party participated in any way.

As far as I understood, the President returned to Russia on the basis of the apparently unfounded news that after his stay in Italy and the importance gained by the Kurdish cause among international public opinion, the conditions had been created for the granting of asylum and support for his negotiation proposal. But instead he had to abandon Russia again to escape the threats to his life or capture. After a short

wandering, there was an agreement with the Greek government according to which he would be hosted in a third country in the Greek embassy under diplomatic protection and at an unspecified time, he would be granted asylum. Indeed, the President reached the Greek embassy in Kenya and was hosted as expected, enjoying the extraterritoriality of the diplomatic legation. I know this directly because Giuliano Pisapia, who was then head of justice for my party as well as Öcalan's lawyer, had the opportunity to go to Nairobi and speak with him in the embassy. But suddenly, on 15 February 1999, the Greek government ordered the ambassador to expel him from the embassy. Waiting for him outside was, according to what I was told, a commando of agents from the Turkish Secret Services and from another country who illegally kidnapped him and transported him, in the way that the world has known through dramatic images, to Turkey. Due to these events, three Greek ministers who had favored the operation had to resign. Among them are the foreign and internal ministers.

Do you think that the Italian government of the time and other countries were responsible for Öcalan's arrest? If the Italian government had wanted it, could Öcalan have stayed in Italy, or what could have been done to make Öcalan stay in Italy?

I think that Italy in particular, given the circumstances of Öcalan's arrival in Rome, and more generally the European Union, have the very serious responsibility of not having favored and worked for the political solution to a conflict that has been bloody for more than 40 years. Kurdistan. On the contrary, following indications from the US and Turkey itself, the PKK was placed, without any parliamentary or even inter-governmental discussion (Italy could not accept it given the position established by the resolution I mentioned earlier), on the list of terrorist organizations drawn up after the Al-Qaeda attacks in New York. With the paradox that the only organization that really fought in Syria against ISIS is persecuted in Europe on the recommendation of a country like Turkey which certainly did nothing against ISIS. Which demonstrates the true nature of the current European Union.

The D'Alema government had the opportunity to work towards a peace process and to develop a foreign policy that should be congenial to Italy given its historical position in the Mediterranean. Dialogue and negotiation were and are possible. So much so that in the 2000s there were approaches and negotiations between the PKK and Erdoğan's government, which obviously failed, above all due to the role that the Turkish military has constitutionally and their political weight. I even believe that the 2016 coup attempt, with the consequent purge of part of the top brass of the armed forces in Turkey, also had to do with Erdoğan's government, at a certain point, attitude towards negotiations with Öcalan himself.

It should also be remembered that on the imminence of the departure of President Massimo D'Alema and Oliviero Diliberto (then Minister of Justice), they said in two statements to news agencies that the government was not competent to grant political asylum and that only the judiciary could do it. This is yet another lie. Everyone knows that normally, as in the case of Öcalan, governments offer asylum and protection and only after a dispute arises does the judiciary deal with it. Furthermore, just a few hours after the declarations of D'Alema and Diliberto, three other ministers in as many declarations said something very different which partly contradicted the first two. And that is that the government should not have granted asylum. Strange that the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Lamberto Dini), that of Defense (Carlo Scognamiglio) and that of Foreign Trade (Piero Fassino, also from the same party as D'Alema) felt the need to say that the government was competent and should not have granted asylum. No Italian journalist, neither in print nor on TV, who are usually very attentive to gathering gossip and highlighting conflicts between politicians, noticed this. Very strange indeed.

In any case, a few months after the President's departure from Italy, the Court of Rome granted the status of political refugee to Öcalan despite the fact that the D'Alema government had instructed the State Attorney's Office to support the denial of asylum in the trial. Which once again highlights the democratic quality of Mr D'Alema and his government and the fact that if Öcalan had remained in Italy he would have been able to fully exercise his civil and political rights.

For the last 3 years, there has been no news from Abdullah Öcalan, who has been held in Imralı Prison for 25 years. The Turkish state, which has stripped Öcalan of all his rights, is imposing heavy isolation on Öcalan. How do you evaluate this isolation?

The Turkish government is afraid of Öcalan who is still the undisputed leader of the Kurdish people. The isolation and inhumane prison treatment demonstrate the fascist nature of the Turkish state. The international mobilization for the liberation of Öcalan must extend and increase in every part of the world. However strong the Turkish state is and however much it is supported by the US and in fact also by the EU, the reason lies on the side of the Kurdish people and President Öcalan.

What would you like to say about Öcalan's role in the solution of the Kurdish question?

It is essential for President Öcalan to be able to play a political role as a free man for the negotiated solution to the conflict. It is just as indispensable the release of Nelson Mandela was to start the process of ending apartheid and the democratization of South Africa. If there is a true leader in the world today worthy of Nelson Mandela, it is President Abdullah Öcalan. His release can put an end to the conflict and inaugurate a peace process with the involvement of countries that have the capacity and political and moral credibility to carry out an accompanying and possibly mediating function.

Öcalan's political thought, writings and ideas are a contribution not only to the Kurdish cause but also to the entire global left and to all free peoples or those fighting for their freedom. The women's revolution, democratic confederalism and the criticism of the hegemonic conception of the state in the world, two theories that live in the experience of the populations of Rojava are universally interesting. All revolutionary and progressive forces in the world should study them thoroughly.

Opinion

The controversial US presence in the Middle East and possible scenarios for Rojava

RAUF KARAKOCAN | BEHDINAN | 31 JANUARY 2024

There is a great humanitarian tragedy in the Gaza Strip due to the war that began with Hamas' attack on Israel. Gaza is no longer the old Gaza. It is also unpredictable where and when the Israeli attacks will stop. No mechanism has yet been found in the international arena to limit or stop the Israeli attacks. More than 26,000 Palestinians have already died in this war. Settlements and much of the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed. The number of victims is increasing day by day, the balance of destruction is getting heavier every day.

The Gaza war has also shaken the political balance in the region. The possibility of a regional expansion has become the main topic of the current debate. The resurgence of tensions in the Red Sea means that the Huthi in Yemen have joined the Gaza war. The conflict over the Red Sea is likely to escalate further. The Lebanese Hezbollah is also carrying out attacks against Israel. However, it cannot yet be said that the war has spread to Lebanon. The Israeli retaliatory strike against the Hamas office in the centre of Beirut, in which Saleh al-Aruri, one of Hamas' leading figures, and his entourage were killed, remained a localised operation.

On the anniversary of the commemoration of the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, an attack was carried out in Kerman in which over 100 people were killed. Although ISIS claimed responsibility for this attack in Iran, it caused an unexpected shock effect. In return, Iran fired rockets at Hewlêr (Erbil) and killed a businessman, which led to new tensions. Iran-affiliated militias are repeatedly attacking US military bases in Iraq and Syria, sending the message that Iran will not leave the US alone. It is in Iran's interest to attack from afar and with proxy forces in order to gain psychological superiority. The most recent attack was directed against the US troops in Jordan. Three soldiers were killed in the attack, which was directly claimed by Iran and its associated forces, and represents a major challenge.

Controlled tension is being built up against the US in a wide geographical area on the fronts of Iranian-backed groups in Yemen, Jordan, Libya, Syria and Iraq. Even if these actions seem like mosquito bites, they are attacks that make the US very uncomfortable. The nature of today's wars is one of harassment, with missiles fired and airstrikes carried out at intervals, rather than all-out war on the front lines, in the air and on land. The attack in Jordan resulted in the first US army casualties since 7 October. US President Biden declared that the attack, in which three soldiers were killed and 25 wounded, had triggered a shock effect in the US. He made no secret of his surprise at the attack.

The US military base, known as Tower 22, is located near the al-Tanf military base on the Syrian border and has a strategic location. The message to be conveyed with this attack is: "We will not leave the US

alone and we are capable of attacking anywhere we want.” The US response to this shock attack was: “We will respond.” It is currently impossible to predict where this escalation will lead in the developing regional conflicts.

While the mutual attacks and threats between the US and Iran and the war between Israel and Hamas continue and a new war front on the Red Sea looms, the news of the end of the US military presence in Iraq also points to changes in US policy for Iraq and Syria.

Given the potential impact of the current tension, and in particular the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas, on the US presidential elections that will take place at the end of the year, it is likely that there will be fine-tuning, if not fundamental policy changes in the region. The very fact that a withdrawal from the region is being discussed shows the need for a new policy.

The withdrawal of the US from Iraq and Syria would not only lead to serious problems in the fight against ISIS, but would also mean that the psychological superiority in the Middle East would be lost to Iran. This means a shift in the regional balance of power in favour of Russia and Iran. And that will, of course, have consequences.

Turkey will want to realise its long-standing ambitions to occupy and annex Rojava. Political relations are determined by the geographical areas and issues where interests coincide. The relationship between the US and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) does not go beyond a tactical relationship in the context of the fight against ISIS. To describe it as a strategic friendship would be an exaggeration. The US will be present in Syria for as long as its own national interests allow. If it is not in their interests, there is no reason for them to stay. In fact, the decision to leave Syria was made in the Trump era and a partial withdrawal took place. With the 2024 presidential elections and a possible change of power, US policy on Syria could change again. Another invasion by Turkey could also be on the agenda.

Turkey will continue to be a thorn in the side of the region under Erdoğan’s rule. It will continue to deepen the hostility in its Kurdish policy. Just as in the north and south of Kurdistan, there are also plans for the destruction of Rojava. The fact that the US is not taking a convincing stance on the Turkish airstrikes has been repeatedly addressed by representatives from Rojava. The Turkish state’s attempts to occupy and annex Rojava are doomed to lead to a dead end in the long term, as the saying goes “Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.”

Efforts to find a solution and normalise relations with Damascus are being blocked by the Turkish state. In any case, it is necessary for the Democratic Autonomous Administration in Rojava to prepare for all possible options. It must demonstrate a structure of will that can withstand all conditions, including the destruction of the economic infrastructure. In order to maintain the current autonomous status, all alternative options for struggle must be considered. Politics throughout the region is highly unpredictable. For this reason, approaches and relationships that require much more sensitivity and sensibility are gaining in importance.

It is the people’s components that will determine developments and set the final point. Those who rely on the organisational structure of the people will always win.

Erdoğan trying to build a world coalition against the Kurds

ZEKI BEDRAN | ANF | 1 FEBRUARY 2024

The Turkish state is mobilising both the US, European countries and powers such as Russia against the Kurds. It is endeavouring to draw the different extremes, those with deep contradictions between them, to its side. In its current state, it is prioritising and concentrating on carrying out the Kurdish genocide. After the May 2023 elections, Erdoğan told Turkish diplomats that they would concentrate on diplomacy, multiply their friends and isolate their enemies. This decision is being acted upon. They are trying to improve their relations with all states, including Greece. They condescend to visit the Arab countries. They closed the book on lording over and showing sticks as in the past. They are also fawning over Arab states in order to get money flowing from them because their economy is bad. They have also increased trade with Israel, established high-level relations and endeavoured to win the support of these circles, including the Jews in the USA.

Turkey developed multifaceted relations with Russia but confronted it after shooting down a plane of theirs. Erdoğan first tried to stand firm, but, putting things at stake, he then started to appease them and make concessions. Russia extracted more concessions from Turkey than ever before. So much so that Erdoğan even bought S-400 missiles from Russia as a bribe. The Turkish state made all these concessions and deepened relations in order to crush the Kurds. Because Russia was in Syria and the way was paved for the Kurds to have a status. There was no possibility to attack and invade Syria without Russia's approval and support. The same situation was the same for Iran. For this reason, it continued initiatives such as the Astana process. And the Astana process turned into an anti-Kurdish front. In the end, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria was declared illegitimate in the statement made after those meetings. They agreed to remove the US from Syria. They agreed to weaken the autonomous regions and to seize or disable their energy resources. The Turkish state's recent air strikes targeting energy resources are linked to these decisions.

Turkey used Sweden's accession to NATO as a bargaining chip against the Kurds. In the end, Sweden and the NATO countries agreed not to support forces like the YPG and to limit Kurdish activities in Europe. The military embargo on Turkey was lifted. The US agreed to provide F-16 fighter jets and to repair the old ones. They have now approved a \$23 billion package. Canada lifted the embargo on the cameras it sold to Turkey for UCAVs and UAVs. Not only Canada, but also Scandinavia and all European countries lifted the arms embargo. These agreements were immediately reflected in the war in Kurdistan. The last two attacks of the Turkish state were total war crimes. They disabled the sources of life in Rojava. Power stations, wheat depots, etc. were hit. Civilians were massacred. But there was no reaction from the US and European countries, nor from Russia. These powers did not see and did not speak. However, they themselves are in Syria and they know well what is happening. The SDF forces that crushed ISIS are being targeted in front of their eyes. They are also opening their airspace to Turkey. The Kurdish people are being torn from their lands and forced to migrate.

The Turkish state is using the contradictions and crisis in the Middle East to eliminate the Kurds. On the one hand, Erdoğan welcomes the Iranian president in Ankara and signs economic and other agreements. On the other hand, he signs Sweden's accession to NATO. On the one hand, he supports Hamas and rants against Israel. On the other hand, he tries to improve his relations with the Iranian leadership. It is

known that Iran and Turkey have deep contradictions. But it needs Iran to crush the PKK and the Kurds because Iran has influence in both Syria and Iraq. Iran is an influential power in the region. This alliance also needs a Kurdish leg. To this end, he has prepared the KDP and is trying to activate Hûda-Par and ENKS. Erdoğan is trying to unite Russia, Iran, the US, Europe and Arab countries against the Kurds and get their support. In this sense, he is trying to build a world coalition against the Kurds.

The Kurdish people, the intellectuals and democratic forces of Syria and Turkey must raise their unity and struggle by knowing these facts. Bloody and dark relations and alliances must be exposed, and the peoples of the world must be enlightened. Turkey has been insisting on this policy of annihilation and denial for a hundred years. As long as there are those who resist and fight, all these plans will be thwarted.



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