

FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN



**A POLITICAL SOLUTION
TO THE KURDISH QUESTION**



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A Political Solution for the Kurdish Question

Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan must be allowed to meet with his lawyers and family and, ultimately, to be freed under conditions that allow him to play a role in finding a just and democratic political solution to Turkey's decades-old Kurdish conflict.

Campaigning committee- September 2024

<https://ocalanvigil.net/>

X: @Vigil4Ocalan

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INTRODUCTION: ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Since October 2023, the global campaign 'Freedom for Öcalan, A Political Solution for the Kurdish Question' has brought together unions, social movements, political parties, elected officials, artists, intellectuals, activists, and millions of Kurds and their supporters. The main aim is to end the isolation of Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan by allowing his lawyers and family to visit him, and ultimately secure his freedom. In doing so, the campaign strives to make a just and democratic political solution to Turkey's century-old Kurdish question possible by enabling Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan's participation in a renewed dialogue.

Öcalan, viewed by millions of Kurds as their leader, has been imprisoned since 1999, after being captured in an international intelligence operation. He has endured torture and long periods of isolation. Despite this, his movement remains central to Kurdish struggles for self-determination and democracy in the Middle East. His theories inspire global movements for women's liberation, equality, and the fight against exploitation.

In this file, we aim to offer an understanding of crucial elements of the campaign, Abdullah Öcalan's life and philosophy, and the present situation on Imrali Island Prison. This year, the campaign and supporters sent numerous letters to the CPT, urging a delegation to visit Imrali and for Öcalan to have regular visits from family and lawyers as required by CoE and CPT obligations. The CPT has visited the island prison nine times since 1999, with the last visit in September 2022. Despite the Committee's criticisms and recommendations on the harsh imprisonment conditions, the Turkish government has chosen to worsen the situation rather than improve it. There has been no contact (including with his family and lawyers) or sign of life from Öcalan for over three and a half years, and the Turkish state has prevented the publication of the CPT reports on their visits to Imrali.



In the last year, efforts reached such a level that CPT themselves took the unprecedented step of responding to our letters and meeting with us. The international press published several articles on the Kurdish question and the inhuman situation towards prisoners in Turkey and globally. 1500 Lawyers from more than thirty countries cosigned a letter to the Turkish Ministry of Justice, asking to visit Abdullah Öcalan and the other three prisoners in İmralı Island Prison in protest of the restrictions on Öcalan's right of access to his lawyers. Global networks of solidarity have been built, advocating for Öcalan's freedom.

In July 2024, 69 Nobel laureates from different fields came together to send two letters on Öcalan's behalf, one to president Erdogan calling on him to send representatives to begin new talks with Öcalan and to end Öcalan's isolation, and one to international organisations tasked with the protection of human rights calling them out on their inaction. Global networks of solidarity have been built, advocating for Öcalan's freedom.

However, despite all of these efforts, we unfortunately have yet to end the isolation against Kurdistan's leader Abdullah Öcalan. The current conditions of Öcalan's imprisonment violate human rights conventions and anti-torture agreements, as recognized by the CPT, ECHR, UN Human Rights Committee, and other institutions. The Turkish state's actions and non-compliance with ECHR decisions are politically motivated. Urgent action is needed. Especially, democratic organizations, institutions and individuals everywhere are called to join the campaign in order to raise awareness globally. Öcalan's solutions offer hope for peace in Turkey and beyond, addressing the most pressing social and political issues of our time.

For this reason, we make the following demands:

- ***Ad-hoc committee in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to address violations and torture against Öcalan***
- ***Implementation of the Committee on the Prevention of Torture's recommendations!- Prevention of Turkey's violations of the Convention. No indirect reintroduction of the death penalty!***
- ***Permission for Öcalan to meet with his lawyers and family!***
- ***Freedom for Öcalan to open the path for a just and democratic political solution to the Kurdish question!***



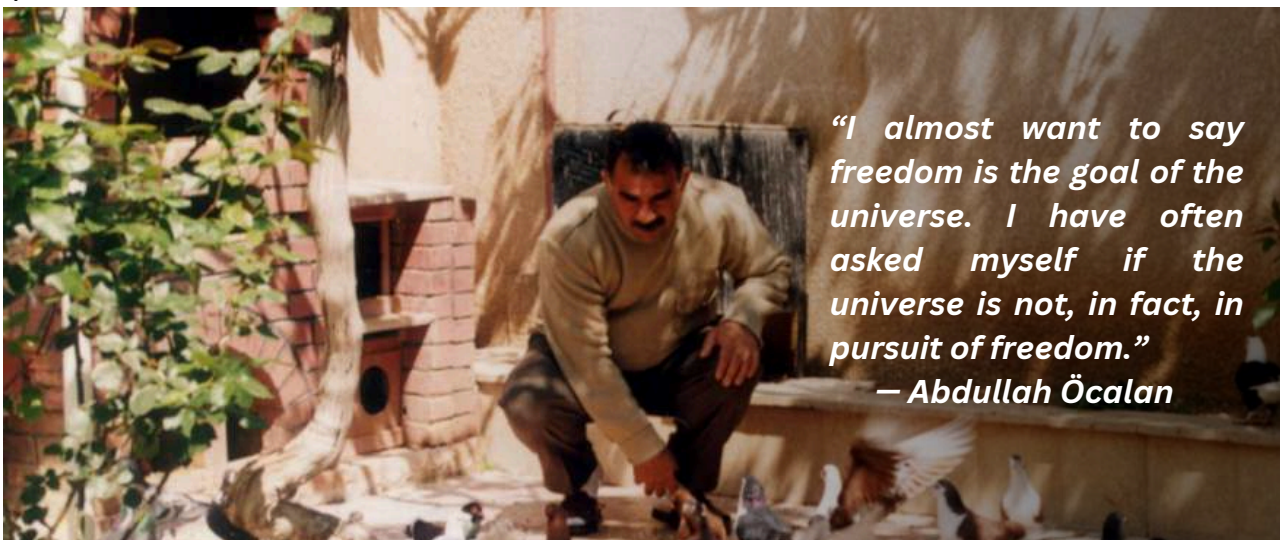
WHO IS ABDULLAH ÖCALAN?

Abdullah Öcalan was born in 1949 to a poor family in Amara (Turkish: Ömerli), in the Northern Kurdistan (the Kurdish region of Turkey). After working as a civil servant in his youth, he studied at Istanbul University and later transferred to Ankara's Faculty of Political Science. The 1971 military coup and the suppression of Kurdish identity prompted him and his friends to investigate the Kurdish issue further.

In 1973, Öcalan and a group of students formed a Kurdish political organization, based on the analysis of Kurdistan as a colony denied self-determination. This movement eventually led to the founding of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1978 in a small village in Northern Kurdistan, with Öcalan as its political and ideological leader.

The Turkish government responded with detentions and violence against the new party's peaceful political activities. In 1979, Öcalan fled to Syria amid a brewing a military coup in Turkey. On September 12, 1980, the Turkish military seized power, resulting in thousands of detentions and widespread torture. From exile, he led the political activities and initiated armed resistance in 1984. In the early 1990s, Öcalan sought a political solution and called for several peace talks, but violence resumed after President Turgut Özal's mysterious death in 1993.

In 1998, after unilateral ceasefires and peace efforts, Öcalan had to flee Syria and went to Europe to promote a political solution to the Kurdish question. After being pushed out of Europe, he was captured in an international operation and brought to the prison island of Imrali in Turkey on 15th February 1999.



More Information:

<https://ocalanvigil.net/kurdish-freedom/>



CONDITIONS IN İMRALI PRISON

İmralı Island Prison, established in 1999, initially held only one prisoner: Abdullah Öcalan. Since 2009, three more inmates have been added. Öcalan's rights have been continuously violated, with Turkey directly responsible and international complicity playing a role. His 1999 capture, an extraordinary rendition without judicial process, violated international law.

Öcalan's legal rights are severely restricted—he has only had five lawyer visits since 2011 and five family visits since 2014. His trial was condemned as unfair by human rights groups and international courts. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2005 that his trial was neither independent nor impartial.

Prolonged isolation and solitary confinement, both forms of torture under international law and according to the U.N. Mandela Principles, are routine in İmralı. Reports of Öcalan being poisoned in 2007 and mistreated in 2008 were met with no accountability. A European laboratory confirmed the presence of toxic chromium and strontium in hair samples. In 2008, Öcalan's lawyers reported that Öcalan had been dragged by prison personnel to an adjoining room and forced to the ground by three persons while his cell was ravaged. When he protested against these brutal measures, he was explicitly threatened with death.

His life sentence without parole, in effect, reintroduces the death penalty in Turkey and has since been applied to thousands. Critically ill prisoners, almost all of them Kurdish, are dying in Turkish prisons in significant numbers. Isolation is now the established norm, normalized through decrees and disciplinary penalties that are not embedded in law.

Between 2013 and 2015, an important round of talks between Abdullah Öcalan and the Turkish state took place in İmralı Island Prison. The “İmralı talks” collapsed after Erdoğan canceled them. Even during that period, no lawyer-client consultations were allowed.

The systemic abuse of Kurdish prisoners and lack of accountability are issues of international concern. Despite the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) being tasked with monitoring Turkish prisons, little action has been taken. The U.S. played a major role in Öcalan's capture and has supported Turkey in downplaying the subsequent human rights abuses.

More information: <https://ocalanvigil.net/turkeys-penal-system/>



A BRIEF SUMMARY OF ABDULLAH ÖCALAN'S LEGAL STATUS

EXECUTION VERDICT

Abdullah Öcalan has been imprisoned on İmralı Island since February 15, 1999, after being forcibly brought to Turkey. Initially sentenced to death, his case was reviewed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which in 2005 found Turkey had violated his right to a fair trial and ordered a retrial. Turkey rejected this, arguing a retrial would be ineffective. The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers accepted Turkey's position and closed the case, claiming Turkey had complied with the ECHR's judgment.

AGGRAVATED LIFE SENTENCE

Öcalan's death penalty was converted into an aggravated life sentence after Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2002. This new sentence mandated severe isolation with no possibility of parole. The ECHR ruled on March 18, 2014, that Öcalan's isolation and aggravated life sentence violated Article 3 of the ECHR, which prohibits torture and requires hope of release for prisoners. The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers is still monitoring the implementation of this ruling, but the Turkish government maintains that the sentence will not be altered due to legal regulations.

CONTINUOUS EXECUTION

Until 2009, Abdullah Öcalan was the only civilian on İmralı Island. Since then, five other inmates have been brought there, with three currently remaining alongside Öcalan. The ECHR ruled on March 18, 2014, that Öcalan's isolation from 1999 to 2009 violated anti-torture provisions. A new application was filed in 2011, covering the continued isolation since 2009. After 12 years, this application is still pending a decision from the ECHR, with no clear timeline for when it will be resolved.

NEW CASES

In addition to the ongoing case at the ECtHR regarding Öcalan's isolation, there is another case filed against Greece in 2019. This case addresses the refusal to process Öcalan's asylum application while he was in Greece and his illegal deportation to Turkey. This case is also still pending.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS DO NOT FULFILL THEIR DUTIES

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has delayed to push Turkey to implement the ECHR judgment. At its 1507th meeting on 17-19 September 2024, the Committee dealt with Turkey's implementation of the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights with regard to aggravated life imprisonment.



The Committee decided to resume its examination at its September 2025 meeting, and in view of the long standing nature of the issue and lack of progress revealed by the available information, instructed the Secretariat.

This decision is completely inadequate gives Turkey permission to continue its violations for another year. Turkey has once again refused to implement the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. This should have had immediate consequences, especially in order to emphasize the value/status of its own institutions, the ECHR and the CPT.

The continuation of Öcalan's isolation deepens the conflicts and wars in the region and prevents the urgently needed democratisation of Turkey. Peace requires dialogue with Öcalan.

We call the committee to act Immediately and to send an urgent ad-hoc committee to visit Öcalan.

BAN ON FAMILY AND LAWYER

Since Öcalan's abduction, numerous legal applications have been filed in Turkey regarding his isolation, but none have been successful. Requests for lawyer and family visits are routinely ignored or denied. Disciplinary penalties have led to automatic bans on visits, with appeals consistently rejected. Since 2021, the judiciary has not only rejected all requests but also obstructed legal processes, making the domestic legal system ineffective for Öcalan and his associates.

TURKEY DOES NOT APPLY DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Turkey's failure to implement ECtHR and UNHRC judgments undermines international legal mechanisms. The Turkish judicial system frequently disregards international rulings, as seen in cases like Kavala and Demirtaş, reflecting a broader issue exemplified by Öcalan's case. İmralı Island serves as a testing ground for legal and political abuses, which are then applied to broader contexts, especially against dissidents in Turkey.

PERPETUAL TORTURE

Based on these facts, Turkish domestic law appears to be obstructing Öcalan's rights, using legal processes to justify his isolation and torture. According to ECtHR decisions, Öcalan's 25-year imprisonment, which began in 1999, has been under unfair conditions considered as torture. International law and justice demand his release, as he has been denied the right to hope.



WHY DO ÖCALAN'S THEORIES MATTER?

Despite harsh restrictions, Abdullah Öcalan has used his imprisonment to propose solutions for Turkey and the region. He has written nine books, a protocol, and a "Road Map". His ideas redefine Kurdish self-determination, arguing that a new nation-state would repeat the oppressive systems imposed by foreign powers. Instead, he advocates for grassroots democracies emphasizing equality, women's liberation, cooperative economies, and environmental protection, making borders irrelevant.

Öcalan's theories inspired groups like the multi-ethnic, multi-religious People's Protection Units (YPG), Women's Defense Units (YPJ) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Syria, who played a major role in defeating the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) and forming the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, promoting coexistence and stability.

***"If I am to be a freedom fighter, I cannot just ignore this:
Woman's revolution is a revolution within a revolution."
— Abdullah Öcalan***

From 2013 to 2015, Öcalan led negotiations between the Kurdish movement and Turkey. His ceasefire lasted over two years, bringing peace and hope for democracy to the region. However, then-Prime Minister Erdogan abandoned the talks – in fear of losing his grip on power – leading to renewed conflict, authoritarianism in Turkey, Turkish invasions in Syria and Iraq and Öcalan's isolation.

Authoritarian regimes fear Öcalan's ideas as they challenge oppressive ideologies. His vision of pluralism, democracy, ecology, and women's liberation could bring long-term peace and coexistence to the Middle East. Different organizations and movements have been inspired by his visions: The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) in Turkey, the Autonomous Administration in Northern Syria (DAANES), the self-governed refugee camp Mexmûr in Northern Iraq or the the "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî"-Revolution in Iran. His ideas offer a framework for resolving the Kurdish question within existing borders, emphasizing democracy and human rights.

***"The right of self-determination of the peoples includes
the right to a state of their own. However, the foundation
of a state does not increase the freedom of a people."
— Abdullah Öcalan***

More information: <https://ocalanvigil.net/philosophy/>



WHAT IS ÖCALAN'S ROLE IN KURDISH EFFORTS FOR PEACE?

Abdullah Öcalan has led numerous peace efforts and developed a framework for resolving the conflict through democratization and social change. His ideas have inspired successful political models, such as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES). By constantly advocating for a peaceful solution he has become the most important voice for peace in the Kurdish liberation movement.

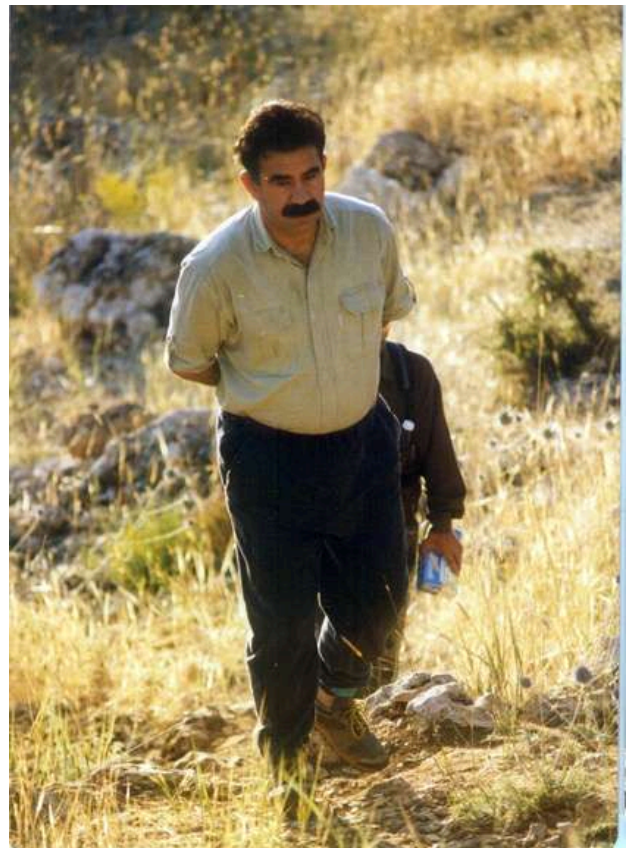
Öcalan's ceasefire initiatives, including nine declared by the PKK, have often been met with limited response from the Turkish government. Despite being isolated in prison, Öcalan remains a key figure in peace efforts and negotiations. His ideas have influenced Kurdish political and military strategies and inspired significant democratic changes.

Two rounds of dialogue between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement have occurred, with limited success. Öcalan's 2013 ceasefire led to significant democratic openings and helped combat ISIS. However, talks collapsed in 2015 because President Erdogan unilaterally stopped the negotiations, and the conflict resumed.

In 2019, Öcalan expressed readiness to resolve the Kurdish question quickly but was cut off from communication. After the earthquake, the PKK declared a humanitarian ceasefire in February 2023, which was extended to May to facilitate Turkey's elections. Despite this, the Turkish government maintained Öcalan's isolation and continued military operations, leading to ongoing conflict. As of 2024, Turkey is escalating the conflict by beginning a war of annexation in Northern Iraq.

More Information:

<https://ocalanvigil.net/peace/>



FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN CAMPAIGN: ACTIONS

The importance of Öcalan's participation in peace talks and his theories to global struggles for freedom and democracy have inspired massive worldwide solidarity.

Kurds and their friends across Kurdistan, the Middle East and the world have engaged in mass campaigns intended to secure Öcalan's freedom and allow him to participate fully in finding a just and democratic political solution to the Kurdish question. These have involved a diversity of tactics and actors. Our campaign will unite and build on these comprehensive efforts.



FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE

Following Öcalan's capture in 1999, the international 'Freedom for Ocalan - Peace in Kurdistan' initiative was established. The International Initiative regards itself as a multi-national peace initiative working for a peaceful and democratic solution for the Kurdish question that will see Kurds, Turks, and all peoples of Mesopotamia living peacefully together. The International Initiative is committed to play its part in peace through intense lobbying and public relations work. Regular publishing and a balanced policy towards the public are a central part of its work.

For 25 years, Öcalan's lawyers have faced persecution, threats, and imprisonment for demanding that Turkey implement its laws and basic international principles regarding his case. This has resulted in several international legal victories.

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled in Öcalan's favor, finding that Turkey violated his right to liberty and security and to a fair trial, that the presence of a military judge in parts of the proceedings violated the right to an independent tribunal, and that the imposition of the death penalty according to an unfair trial constituted cruel and inhuman treatment.

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture has repeatedly warned that Turkey's treatment of Öcalan in prison violates binding international law.

In 2022, 350 lawyers from 22 countries applied to Turkey's Ministry of Justice to visit Öcalan in prison. 750 lawyers from Turkey and more than 1,000 lawyers from Syria applied to represent Ocalan. In early 2023, Delegation Against Isolation visited Turkey representing them.

Every year on February 15, the anniversary of Öcalan's abduction from Kenya in 1999, Kurds all over the world demonstrate in protest.

On October 9, to mark the anniversary of his forced departure from Syria in 1998, demonstrations occurred across Turkey and Kurdistan: including Gemlik, the town opposite Imrali Island, and in Kurdish cities in Syria, where Öcalan's ideas inspired the defeat of ISIS and where many Kurds knew him personally.

Every year on April 4, Öcalan's birthday, Kurds travel to Amara, the village where he was born, and celebrate the occasion by planting trees.



SIGNATURE CAMPAIGNS

During a signature campaign conducted in 2005-2006, around 3.5 million people from all parts of Kurdistan signed a statement affirming that they regard Öcalan as their political leader.

In 2023, nearly three million signatures demanding freedom for Öcalan were collected from North and East Syria alone. The signatures were presented to the Council of Europe in August.



HUNGER STRIKES

In 2007, a hunger strike began in Strasbourg, France, to protest Öcalan being poisoned. A wave of protests quickly spread across Kurdistan, Turkey, and Europe.

In a second hunger strike, which began in Strasbourg and Turkey in 2011, more than 700 Kurdish prisoners and many ordinary Kurds all over the world demanded the right to speak their mother tongue and insisted that the Turkish state negotiate with Öcalan.

In 2018 and 2019, a campaign of hunger strikes launched by imprisoned HDP MP Leyla Güven grew to involve hundreds of Kurdish political prisoners and activists in Turkey and beyond demanding an end to Öcalan's isolation. The hunger strikes resulted in Öcalan's first meetings with his lawyers in years in early 2019. The meetings occurred periodically until August 2019. He has not been allowed to meet with his lawyers since then.

In 2023-2024, coordinated hunger strikes were carried out in prisons by hundreds of Kurdish political prisoners in Kurdistan, Turkey and Greece to demand an end to Öcalan's isolation.



CULTURE AND ARTS

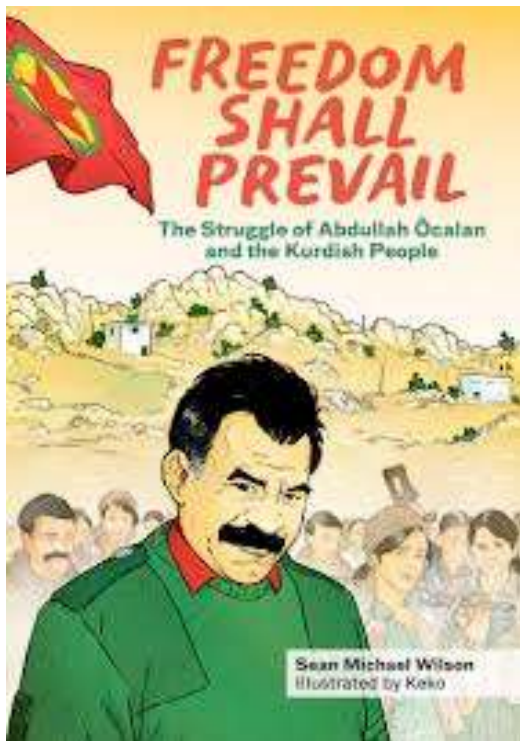
The world of culture, with its diverse, beautiful and creative forms of expression, has also shown its solidarity against Öcalan's isolation.

On stage, plays such as “La celda sin noche” by playwright Galder Irusta, performed in the theater network of the Basque Country and was co-produced by the Basque autonomous institutions. In Norway, a play titled ‘Baqorban”, directed by Pia Maria Roll also sought to draw attention to the cause.

Musicians and composers have shown great solidarity in the struggle for the respect of human rights: in addition to the exceptional chamber opera “Öcalan” by the Texan Nathan Felix, concerts have been organized in Italy, Spain, France and Germany with large audiences and will continue to be organized in the future.

Comic book authors also participated in their own way. Award-winning Scottish graphic novelist Sean Michael Wilson and illustrator Keko prepared “Freedom Shall Prevail: The Struggle of Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish People”: the first graphic novel to explore the life and struggle of Abdullah Öcalan. It was published on the occasion of his 75th birthday.

The famous Italian cartoonist Zerocalcare has drawn about and for Öcalan on several occasions.



DELEGATIONS

In 2005, an ad-hoc delegation attempted to visit Imrali following a year of visit bans imposed on Öcalan. For the past 10 years, international peace delegations have been organised to assess Öcalan's situation, demand meetings and an end to isolation, and meet with legal experts and human rights organizations working for peace.

HONORARY CITIZENSHIP

Thirteen municipalities have given Öcalan honorary citizenship. Many are in Italy, one of the countries through which Öcalan traveled before his capture.



“FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN – A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION” CAMPAIGN

This new campaign was launched on 10 October - the day after the 25th anniversary of Abdullah Öcalan's expulsion from Syria that ended with his abduction by an international plot and imprisonment in Turkey. International supporters carried out 74 actions - one for each year of Öcalan's life - in 31 different countries.



FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN! A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION!

Argentina, Australia (2 locations), Austria 92 locations), Bangladesh, Belgium (European Parliament Brussels and 2 other locations), Brazil, Colombia (2 locations), Cyprus, Denmark, East Timor, Ecuador, England (2 locations), Eswatini, France (Strasbourg and 6 other locations), Germany (11 locations), Greece (2 locations), India, Ireland, Italy (15 locations), Kenya (2 locations), Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Scotland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain/Basque Country/Catalonia (6 locations), Sweden, Switzerland (6 locations), and Wales.

Those taking part included politicians, trade unionists, and activists, many of whom see links between Öcalan and the Kurdish Movement and their own struggles. The first message received came from women of the Bangladesh Garment Workers' Union, and there was strong support from other subjugated nations, such as the Basques. Among the many demonstrations and oral statements, were some more visual messages - a giant image of Öcalan in Munich, a street performance in Berlin, and a mock-up of Öcalan's prison cell in Lubjiana.

The French authorities prevented the central event outside the Council of Europe in Strasbourg with a last-minute ban, but the parliamentary speakers gave their speeches inside the Council building instead.

These international actions were followed by over thirty demonstrations in different parts of Kurdistan, and more in the Kurdish diaspora, and by statements of support from Kurdish organisations everywhere. In Kurdistan, supporting groups have ranged from cultural and art organisations in North and East Syria, to Arab youth in Şengal. The call for Öcalan's freedom made in Amed (Diyarbakir) was supported by 172 different organisations.



MASS ACTIONS & EVENTS

Around the world, street stalls were held in many cities, and many marches were organised by Kurdish youth movements.

Demonstrations, press conferences, and panel discussions in support of the campaign have been held across Europe, South America, Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Thousands of postcards have been sent to İmralı Island prison.

MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION IN COLOGNE, GERMANY

On the 17th of February, tens of thousands of people from across Europe gathered in Cologne for a demonstration to mark the 25th anniversary of the handing over of Abdullah Öcalan to Turkey on 15 February 1999.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, BOOK DAYS AND DIALOGUES WITH ÖCALAN

Conferences on Öcalan's theories have been held in different countries in Europe, Latin America, Kurdistan, and the wider Middle East, attracting attention from political parties, social movements, academics, activists, and others seeking to understand his ideas and the ways in which the Kurdish movement implements them in practice and build international solidarity.



FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN! A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION!

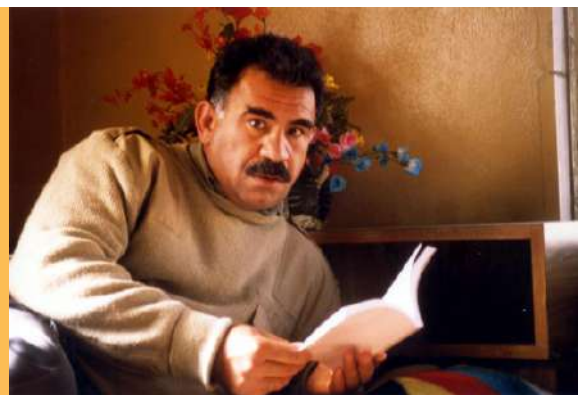
Alongside many smaller meetings, and further statements from groups and individuals, there have been discussions and support statements at the International Women's Forum in Düsseldorf; at the World Youth Conference in Paris - attended by representatives of over sixty organisations; at the Dialogue Forum in Raqqa - attended by 250 women; and at the international Art and Freedom Conference organised in Basel by the Academy for Democratic Modernity. There has been a conference at the University of Rome, and a press conference at the Italian parliament, and Öcalan's situation was raised in the Parliament of New South Wales. Spain's Aragon Parliament hosted a discussion on Kurdish rights, Öcalan's isolation in May of 2024. Support from artists has included an installation in Paris with a prison cell for each year of Öcalan's incarceration.

In 2023 alone, international conferences were held in Hamburg, Germany and Bogota, Colombia. These conferences saw hundreds of participants despite active censorship and repression.

The Global Öcalan Books Days, were held between 7 and 14 December 2023 and ignited a series of events worldwide, including readings, discussions, and seminars across Europe, Latin America, the USA, and the Middle East. The Öcalan-Books website facilitates access to Öcalan's writings in 16 languages, fostering international engagement throughout the week.

A conference was held in the European Parliament in April 2024 titled 'Political Prisoners: Isolation, ill-treatment and torture' conference, which addressed the detention conditions of political prisoners in Turkey and Europe, focusing specifically on conditions in Imrali.

In June 2024, events across Europe titled 'Dialogue with Öcalan – you can't imprison ideas!' have been organized, with the goal to address the ongoing isolation of Öcalan and foster public discourse around his concepts and writings.



OPEN LETTER BY 69 NOBEL PRIZE LAUREATES

69 Nobel laureates have addressed an open letter to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, calling for a restart of the peace negotiations that have been stalled since 2015 in order to invigorate the institutions. Another letter urging for Öcalan's release and to put pressure on the Turkish government was sent to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoM).

In the letter it says:

We call upon all of these bodies to fulfill their obligations regarding protecting the rights of Abdullah Öcalan.

President Erdoğan has himself recognized that the only way forward to peace between the Turkish and the Kurdish people is through dialogue and negotiation with Abdullah Öcalan, as was demonstrated with during the Oslo talks (2009-2011) and the Imrali process (2013-2015). While the negotiations did not bear fruit at that time, that they took place is the clear recognition negotiations are the way forward and they must take place with Mr. Öcalan. We call for his release from Imrali and for the suspended negotiations to be resumed.

The people of the world want peace and a secure future, we join them in that desire.

In response to the letter European institutions made non-binding promises on the isolation of Öcalan.

HUNDREDS OF LAWYERS APPLY TO VISIT ÖCALAN

Over 1,500 lawyers from more than 30 countries have written to Turkey's Ministry of Justice, expressing concern over restrictions on Öcalan's access to legal counsel at İmralı Island prison. They describe the conditions as a discriminatory form of isolation, prompting warnings from the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) about potential violations of prohibitions against torture and inhumane treatment. The lawyers have formally requested permission to visit Öcalan to advocate for his rights.



TRADE UNION CAMPAIGN

The Freedom for Öcalan UK trade union campaign was launched in 2016 in the UK parliament by UNITE and the GMB, following mass outrage in the union movement at Turkey's support for ISIS and refusal to help the Syrian Kurds defend themselves against the extremist group in Kobané.

Since then it has grown to include 14 major unions and won support from the Trade Union Congress. Unions from other countries across Europe, Latin America, and Africa have also joined the campaign and launched efforts of their own.

In July 2023, a coalition of over 40 unions, local governments, parties and movements, and intellectuals held a press conference in Brussels demanding urgent action to guarantee Öcalan's safety and well-being.



LETTERS TO THE CPT

In the spring of 2024, dozens of letters from European civil society, politicians, activists, and unions were sent to the CPT, demanding that Öcalan's lawyers and family be allowed to visit him. This initiative was paired also with demonstrations and press conferences held outside of the CPT, and was successful in both eliciting a response from the CPT, and in bringing international attention to the struggle for the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan.

Dr. Alan Mitchell

President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)

E-Mail: cptdoc@coe.int

Dear Dr. Mitchell,

We, the concerned members of an international network comprised from various NGOs, trade unions, political parties, and European Parliament members, are writing to you following our EP conference with an urgent appeal that requires your immediate consideration. We are joined by thousands of supporters who have peacefully gathered around the headquarters of the CPT and CoE for five days of protest in the hope of gaining your attention.

For the past 36 months, Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, who is seen by millions of Kurds as their rightful political representative, has been held in an extreme form of incommunicado detention by the Turkish state on the prison island of İmralı. During this illegal and inhumane isolation, Mr. Öcalan has been "disappeared" and dropped into a void of "non-existence," while being denied all contact with the outside world, including his lawyers and family. Throughout this period, Turkey has attempted to transform İmralı island into a "floating coffin". Mr. Öcalan, who is now 75 years old, has been subjected to cruel torture through isolation for 25 years and over the last three years, no information has been provided concerning his health. At this point, even his whereabouts cannot be confirmed, and his physical condition is a highly sensitive issue for millions of Kurds who see him as embodying their national voice.

This is we are summoning you, the CPT, to act. As the CPT, you are entitled to visit all places of detention of states which are party to the Convention, including Turkey. This affords you the ability to send your team of experts to İmralı, where the Turkish government must grant you unrestricted access to visit where Mr. Öcalan is being held captive and allow you to interview him in private so he can communicate with you freely.

What we are asking is simply that the members of the CPT act in accordance with Article 3 of the Statute of the CoE, which states that "Every member of the Council of Europe must accept the principles of the rule of law and the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms." Mr. Öcalan is a citizen of a CoE member state that has been denying him his human rights for two and half decades, and for the last three years, has been depriving him of his legal rights to meet with his lawyers and speak with his family.

All we ask, with complete sincerity, is that you please immediately send a delegation to visit İmralı Island to speak with Mr. Öcalan and check on his well-being. Following that, we would greatly appreciate if you could attempt to compel Turkey to allow him to receive a visit from his family and lawyers, so that they are in compliance with CoE and CPT obligations. This would help address an urgent human rights issue and concern for millions of Kurds and could also renew the spirit of reconciliation, which are needed to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

With gratitude for your time and hope that you receive this as a heartfelt plea,

The Internationalist Solidarity Network behind the
'Freedom for Öcalan: A Political Solution to the Kurdish Question' Campaign

Members of the Network

- Abha Bhatia, Founder of 1 Billion Rising, India
- Agnes Wanderspegh, Editor Tamed People's Council, Germany
- Alfonso Di Stefano, Solidarity with Kurds, Geneva, Italy
- Anna Franz Compenqers, Head of Foreign Relations for the FBI, Italy
- André Metzger, Amicus kurdes de Bretagne, France
- Antonino De Cristofano, Executive of COBAS School Trade Union, Italy
- Ana Zupanec, Activist ADM, Slovenia
- Beatriz Cardona i Pons, Representative of the Trade Union in Valencia, Spain
- Benny Orlé Gurshtajn, Member of Solidaridad Solidarity Committee with Kurdistan, Left Party, Sweden
- Beth Hartmann, Member of the Solidarity with Kurdistan Initiative, Norway
- Bill Bowring, Professor, Business, Birkbeck College, University of London, UK
- Daniel Lock, Associate Professor of Political and Social Philosophy, University of Amsterdam, Germany
- Dursin Dagdeviren, IUTCC board member, KURD-AKAD, Germany
- Drorin Bege, Group leader for the Civica Bologna Coalition in the Bologna City Council, Italy
- Domenico Macagnoli, Via Roma, Italy
- Eduardo Lora Camacho, Representative of the IMC Alternative Trade Union, Catalonia
- Eftychios Efthymiou, Lawyer, Cyprus
- Eleonora Bonaccorsi, Chair of Food & Fair Association, Italy
- Eleonora De Maio, Former Municipal Councilor of Naples, Italy
- Elizabeth Deery, Former President of the Parliament of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Switzerland
- Emily Marion Clancy, Vice Mayor of the Municipality of Bologna, Italy
- Emmanuel Bournat, Member of the 'Pacheco en Canari' Organization, Colombia
- Erik Hagelstein, Activist and political scientist, Germany
- Elisabetta Vitano, Researcher at University in Sicily, Italy
- Eva Bupples-Eisenroeder-Peral, Member of Solidaridad Solidarity Committee with Kurdistan, Left Party, Sweden
- Fabrizio Venturoli, Academician, Foundation Committee for Öcalan, Italy
- Fernando Del Sol, Representative of the CSC Trade Union in Catalonia
- Florentia Guarche, France
- Felipe Martinez, Sociologist and writer, Colombia
- Gerhard Keller, Wahlstrickkingler e.V., Germany
- Gian Luigi Deiana, Amicus-Committee Association, Githera, Italy
- Guadalupe Fariñas, Movement contre le racisme et pour l'antiracisme des peuples (MRAP), Switzerland
- Giuliana Piccola, Left green alliance coordinator for the women groups, Italy
- Giovanni Piazza, Lecturer at the Political Science Faculty of the University of Catania, Italy
- Gineke Bheze, Activist for the Prison, Germany
- Gineke Gys, Lawyer, MP De Link, Germany
- Isabel Martínez Risco Valdivieso, Theater Actress, Galicia, Spain
- Jeylan Jan, Chair of Franco-Kurdistan Association, France
- Joana Mott, Secretary of FLC CGIL of Milan, Trade Union of Schools, Italy
- Joop Brandt, Professor Emeritus, Department of Science and Environment, Denmark
- Jona Sophia Kold, Linkspopulär, Germany
- Jon Vassini Mertz, PhD Candidate in Anthropology, University of Lisbon, Portugal
- Julia Iglesias Lopez, Platforma Kurdistan, Basque Country
- Julia Ward, Former MEP UK
- Kaja Hilmar, International Leader of Socialist Youth, Norway
- Katarina Wierheim, Chair of EUTCC, University of Bergen, Norway
- Karin Niedermeier, Journalist, Austria
- Gonzalo Nolas, Collaborator of RAM, Spain
- Mari Clacia Ramirez, ARIAN Youth Organization in the Catalonia
- Maria M. Gomez Urtas, Plataforma Kurdistan, Basque Country
- Martin Dohler, Writer, Germany
- Mariamela De Groot, Secretary of FLC CGIL of Lombardy, Italy
- Miguel Romero, Colombia
- Mitchell Eric, Senior Lecturer, Director of Political Sciences
- Mireia Ullastri Ugarriza, Representative of the ELA Trade Union, Basque Country
- Nikita Subraman, Andra Giza, COBAS School Trade Union, Santiago, Italy
- Noemi Fettes, Galizia Buzan Platform, Spain
- Nihad Al Kadi, Human Rights Activist, Netherlands
- Ogmundur Johannsson, Former Minister of Justice, Iceland
- Oliver Lundblad Behn, Kurdistan Committee Representative in International Forum Copenhagen, Denmark
- Orsola Caggiano, Journalist, Basque Country
- Paolo Ferrero, Former Minister of Social Affairs, Italy
- Petal Argo Tiers, Co-chair of the Solidarity with Kurdistan Committee, France
- Pedro Leites Dias, Representative of OSTA Trade Union, Angón
- Renato Stratta, Secretary CUB Trade Union, Italy
- Renzo Fernando Germano Le Mijon, Co-chair of MRAP, France
- Rezan Satıcı İvrett, Anti Law Office, Turkey
- Roberto Maglioli, As Pieno Rosso Italian editor of Öcalan's book, Italy
- Rolf Gossens, Lawyer, politician, parliamentary adviser, and civil rights activist, Germany
- Rosa Monastrol, Editor of L'Humanité, France
- Rosana Piroddi, COBAS School Trade Union, Santiago, Italy
- Rudolf Bingel, Die Linke Baden-Württemberg, Germany
- Sabine Schulze, Die Linke Baden-Württemberg, Germany
- Sarah Glynn, Architect, Academic, Activist, UK
- Sean O'Neil, political scientist, journalist, Germany
- Simon Dobbin, Director of International and Research for UNCTE the Union, UK
- Stephanie Herrewé, Activist, UK
- Stephen Knight, Barrister, Criminal Defence and Public Law Practitioner, UK
- Susanne Köllner, Wahlstrickkingler e.V., Germany
- Thomas Schmidt, Lawyer, ELDF
- Thomas Phillips, Liverpool John Moores University, UK
- Thomas Rodosow, Co-Director of The Kurdish Center for Studies, USA
- Tard Kervin, Member of the Red Party, Norway
- Tessa Schmitt, Lawyer, Cyprus
- Valentin Bragan Jalen, Representative of the IC Confederation of Trade Unions in Anatolia
- Victoria Jose Belandier, Representative LAB Trade Union in Basque Country
- Walter Bacci, President of the Party of the European Left
- Xavi L. Xerxa Jacome, Representative of CIG - Galician Confederation of Trade Unions

More Information: <https://ocalanvigil.net/resistance/>



VIGIL FOR ÖCALAN

On June 25, 2012, Kurds began holding a daily vigil in front of the Council of Europe building in Strasbourg. They are calling for Öcalan to be freed and are determined to continue the vigil until this goal is achieved. This vigil remains ongoing at present.



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**FREEDOM FOR
ÖCALAN**
**A POLITICAL SOLUTION
TO THE KURDISH QUESTION**



Freedom For Ücalan, A Political Solution to the Kurdish question

#FreeÜcalan4PoliticalSolution