



Newsletter
by REPAK

WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENT

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In this newsletter we have dealt with the ecological problems in the four regions of Kurdistan and tried to share the situation and solutions with you from a woman's perspective.



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Woman is the first society of nature

In early human societies, women played a fundamental role in the production of life together with nature. Geological excavations in Göbeklitepe in Urfa show that women have been the pioneers of agriculture, seed growing and animal husbandry before the Neolithic. The woman was directly integrated with nature and the nature-woman relationship started then. That is why; Mother Nature, Mother Earth depiction has survived until today.

With the emergence of class societies and the patriarchal order, Nature and Woman have been dominated together. Capitalist modernity has commodified nature and women. Exploitation has

penetrated the soil, the veins of the tree and the marrow of the woman.

Capitalist modernity has seen nature only as a source of production, the air we breathe leaves us breathless, the water we drink is polluted, forests are destroyed, all living creatures are deprived of oxygen, power plants, chemicals, dams, cyanides, etc. We can multiply examples. In short, like the exploitation of underground and surface natural resources, it has created a great ecological destruction. We can accept the discourse 'the world has gone mad' precisely as the cheap labour and production object created by capitalist modernity on women and nature.

Depletion of the ozone layer is the end of the world.

For this reason; Öcalan states that capitalist modernity objectifies nature and women and destroys the spirit of life. Women around the world have waged important ecological struggles against the destruction of nature. Examples such as the CHIPKO Movement in India, the GREEN BELT MOVEMENT in Kenya, the STANDING ROCK Resistance in the USA, show that women have taken the lead in defence of nature and life. Mapuche women also defend their ancestral lands against mining.

Eco-feminist movements struggle to liberate nature and women together.

The relationship between women and nature, the effects of capitalist modernity on women and nature, the global women's struggles for ecology, as I have mentioned above, while briefly reminding, of course, the ecological approach of the Kurdish women's movement, the basic ideological determination of Leader Öcalan on Women and

Nature - Ecology is the main point of view of this article. The Kurdish women's movement considers the emancipation of women in the context of the reconstruction of the relationship with nature. Taking into account the historical development of the relationship of exploitation between women and Nature, we argue that Emancipation requires a multi-layered transformation. For this, a radical struggle for ecology and the socialisation of ecology are essential.

Leader Öcalan links the freedom of Nature and the freedom of Women and says 'Woman is the first society of Nature'. Without women's liberation, it is not possible to create a society in harmony with nature. The domination over women and nature is the greatest sin of civilisation. In this context, it defines Democratic Modernity and its system, Democratic Confederatism, as an ecological, democratic and women's liberationist paradigm and bases the new life on three pillars.

Our ecological-women's perspective has developed both theoretical and practical

alternatives. While our struggle meets with Eco-feminist movements at the global level, of course, all women's movements today take the Rojava Women's revolution, which is the cornerstone of the Kurdistan women's revolution and has become flesh and blood, as an example.

The Rojava women's revolution is not only a revolution won against ISIS, colonialists and occupiers. It is the revolution of Light against Darkness, Freedom against Slavery, the sprouting of Nature, Soil and Life. The Jinwar women's village and women's co-operatives have become small prototypes of ecological living on a global scale.

That is why; the basis of free society is to rebuild the relationship between woman and Nature.

For a democratic society, to liberate nature and women, to create a new model of life against capitalist modernity.

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Capitalist-Patriarchal Ecological Crisis

While ecological destruction is felt globally as one of the most pressing crises of our time, in Turkey and specifically in the geography of Kurdistan, this destruction takes on a unique form within the triangle of state, capital and violence. The accelerating ecological destruction in Turkey and Kurdistan has turned into a deepening crisis through the domination of nature by neoliberal policies and state-supported mega projects. Deforestation, mining massacre of the landscape, hydroelectric power plants and dam projects, and urbanization turning cities into concrete cemeteries are not only environmental catastrophes but also political issues that

push social crises to the breaking point. However, the effects of this destruction are not distributed homogeneously; in the Kurdish geography, they intertwine with war, violence, and repression policies, reaching far more severe dimensions. In the geography of Northern Kurdistan, ecological massacres, which have become tools of violence beyond profit, are implemented as continuations of denial operations by the state and power monopoly. Ecological crises are not merely the technical results of environmental degradation; they are structural manifestations of the exploitative relationship that

our social, economic, and political systems establish with nature. Ecology, as the indispensable foundation of life and the condition for the continuity of all living and non-living beings, is not only an issue we urgently need to address but also a matter of existence that we must place at the center of all political and economic decision-making mechanisms. The capitalist production of the last two centuries has left irreversible effects on the earth. The process of capital accumulation that accelerated with the industrial revolution also brought with it the notion of seeing nature as an unlimited resource. The destruction of forests for profit, the invasion of rivers with dams, the consumption of fossil fuels, and the restructuring of all ecosystems according to industrial needs are just a few examples of how capitalism commodifies nature.

Similarly, in Turkey, as a result of capitalist production, the plundering of nature that feeds capital has accelerated over the last 20 years and has become intertwined with the rent-based transformation

created by neoliberal policies. In this process, in which the construction sector is sanctified as a locomotive, forests, coast lines, and agricultural lands have been concretized under so-called mega projects, streams have been commodified through hydroelectric plants, and ecosystems have suffered irreversible damage due to lands opened to mining companies. While this is the current situation in Turkey, the ecological destruction in the Kurdistan region has become a tool of ethnically based political repression.

The 22 dams built within the scope of the GAP (Southeastern Anatolia Project) were implemented with the aim of controlling water resources in Kurdistan and increasing energy production, but the real face of these projects is an extension of "security-oriented" policies. Especially mega projects like the Ilisu Dam not only interrupt the natural flow of rivers but also destroy biodiversity and cause a series of ecological problems that contribute to climate change. This project, which has resulted in the evacuation of 199 villages, has also

submerged a historical and cultural asset like Hasankeyf under water. The dams spread throughout the geography of Kurdistan become part of "security" policies. Mining projects stretching from Dersim to Şırnak, forest fires, and massacres are also carried out for the same reasons. Ecological destructions, which have become symbols of not only environmental but also identity-based annihilation, are sustained as a "tool of denial." The ecological destruction in Kurdistan is a striking example of how it has turned into a political-military control mechanism in the Kurdish geography.

When considered together with the dimensions of social gender, ecological massacres reveal structural similarities between neoliberal capitalism's domination over nature and patriarchal domination. The multi-layered exploitation mechanisms to which women are subjected in the fields of production and reproduction become more visible.

The changing war strategy in the geography of Kurdistan, which aims at forced

displacement, makes migration to cities inevitable and traps women in a spiral of poverty confined to metropolises. The detachment from the production sphere means not only economic impoverishment but also the fragmentation of social identities and collective life practices. Women who migrate to cities are forced to work in the informal sector in low-paid, insecure jobs to make a living and become targets of urban poverty. The productive role held in rural areas is replaced in cities by an increasing domestic labor burden and social exclusion. Language barriers, cultural alienation, and discrimination make the urban integration process even more difficult.

The ecological massacres experienced in Turkey and the geography of Kurdistan are, beyond an environmental disaster, the result of the domination of capitalist modernity over nature and society. Neoliberal policies under the guidance of the state-capital alliance commodify nature while irreversibly destroying the livelihoods, social fabric, and cultural memory of rural communities, particularly

women. Women emerge as subjects who bear the heaviest burden of this multi-layered crisis while also producing the most radical practices of resistance. The pioneering and active role of women in the ecological struggle strengthens the organic link between defending life and the women's liberation struggle. The lines of resistance formed against ecological massacres are meaningful only with an anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal perspective.

In this context, it is clear that the policies to be developed against the ecological crisis should not be limited to technical solutions but must enforce a paradigm that centers the local, women's freedom, and democracy. The productive and collective relationship women establish with nature also presents an alternative life model against exploitative power practices. Repairing the damage caused by ecological destruction will be possible by learning from resistance experiences and making the voices defending life visible.

Derya AKYOL



Ecological Issues in Southern Kurdistan

Southern Kurdistan faces numerous environmental problems and crises. Some of these are linked to the dominant capitalist system that drives global policies today, while others stem from the lack of proper planning and environmental management by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Below are some of the key environmental issues and crises in the region:

1. Ecocide: In the 1980s, under the Ba'athist regime, Southern Kurdistan experienced ecocide, especially during the Anfal campaign, the chemical attack on Halabja, and the destruction of around 4,000 villages. After the

uprising and during the 1990s, ecocide continued under local party leaders. With the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government, which prioritizes corporate interests, the government gave companies permission to dig into mountains and construct residential units. One example is the destruction of the Mamenda mountains. In Derbendixan, five quarries are in operation, destroying forested mountains. Meanwhile, the shelling of villages, border areas, and pastures by Turkey and Iran continues, devastating the natural environment.

- **Environmental Migration:** Due to climate change and desertification, migration from central and southern Iraq to Southern Kurdistan began over a decade ago. The region faces demographic changes and shortages of water, electricity, schools, and roads. In some areas, especially Germiyan, desertification has begun.
- **Land Use Change:** Hundreds of agricultural land parcels have been repurposed for residential units, commercial projects, and investment. These lands were transferred to investors by the government at symbolic prices, and most of these projects are tax-exempt for 10 years.
- **Unregulated Natural Resource Exploitation:** Resources are extracted without considerations on their renewability and sustainability. Oil and gas companies operate under 10- to 50-year contracts. Hundreds of unregulated oil refineries extract and

transport oil daily using trucks, which poses threats to humans, the risk of deaths and fires during transportation, and of the extinction of local biodiversity.

- **Plants do not grow on their roots:** The industrial agriculture model, the use of artificial seeds, and of chemical fertilizers and pesticides have damaged the soil of Southern Kurdistan. According to research, the cheapest and most harmful types of chemical fertilizers are sold in markets. It is estimated that 80% of local seed varieties have been lost. The soil and water in Penjwen have become toxic due to chemical agriculture.
- **Dams:** Seas and lakes are drying up due to dams built by occupying states on water sources, particularly affecting the Elwan and Sirwan rivers. In villages, cities, and towns, groundwater is being used without any planning, and hundreds of wells have been drilled. In the last 20

- years, the groundwater level has dropped by 500 meters. By 2022, it was estimated that 50,257 wells had been drilled in the Kurdistan Region.
- Lack of Waste Management Infrastructure:
- Household, industrial, and medical waste is either dumped directly on land or burned.

The government fails to take responsibility for environmental problems, and public awareness remains low. Environmental organizations, activists, and ecologists are making serious efforts, but addressing these issues requires stronger public engagement and cooperation.

Halwest Kerîm
Ecofeminist



Without women's freedom, we can not speak about ecological freedom

My years of work in municipalities and ecological committees in Rojava have shown me that the ecological struggle is not just about the environment — it's also tied to social change. The connection between women and nature reveals how gender inequality and the domination of capitalist modernity affect both. That's why we cannot talk about ecological freedom without first achieving women's liberation.

In the revolutionary paradigm of Rojava, ecology is seen as one of the main pillars of social transformation. This perspective views nature not as a resource or means of production, but as something

we live and interact with. Women have played a key role in the process of creation and transformation. Women's ecological committees, cooperatives, and efforts to preserve traditional knowledge have become a central part of social liberation and collective life.

During my time in the ecology committees, we put many projects in practice. These included developing chemical-free farming methods, conserving local seeds, conducting recycling workshops, and supporting women-led cooperatives. Especially in Afrin, the work women did in areas like olive production and making natural

soap was important for both ecological recovery and economic solidarity. However, with the fall of Afrin, some of these projects were either destroyed or had to be moved from their original locations

One of the biggest challenges we faced was the ongoing threat of war and aggression. Direct military attacks — like the bombing of dams, destruction of energy infrastructure, and burning of forests — damaged not only the natural environment but also the living spaces of communities. Another major difficulty was that ecological awareness in society hadn't yet reached the needed level. Although we set up ecological commissions in local councils and municipalities, both limited technical capacity and a lack of resources were major factors that limited our work.

Despite all these challenges, the ecological struggle led by women in Rojava created a new kind of awareness in society. Women began to see nature not just as a space for production, but as a space where life and relationships are built. This perspective didn't

just protect the environment — it also reshaped women's social roles, increased their influence in decision-making, and became a lived practice of freedom that reached into all areas of life.

Today, one of the most important lessons from the women's ecology movement in Rojava is the transformative power of small, local, and collective solutions. Initiatives like women's cooperatives, neighborhood fruit orchards, recycling workshops, and community gardens provide a model of repair and resistance that, addressing the global challenges of the climate crisis, is starting locally. At the same time, approaching these struggles from a women's perspective turns the ecological fight from a technical issue into a broader social struggle.

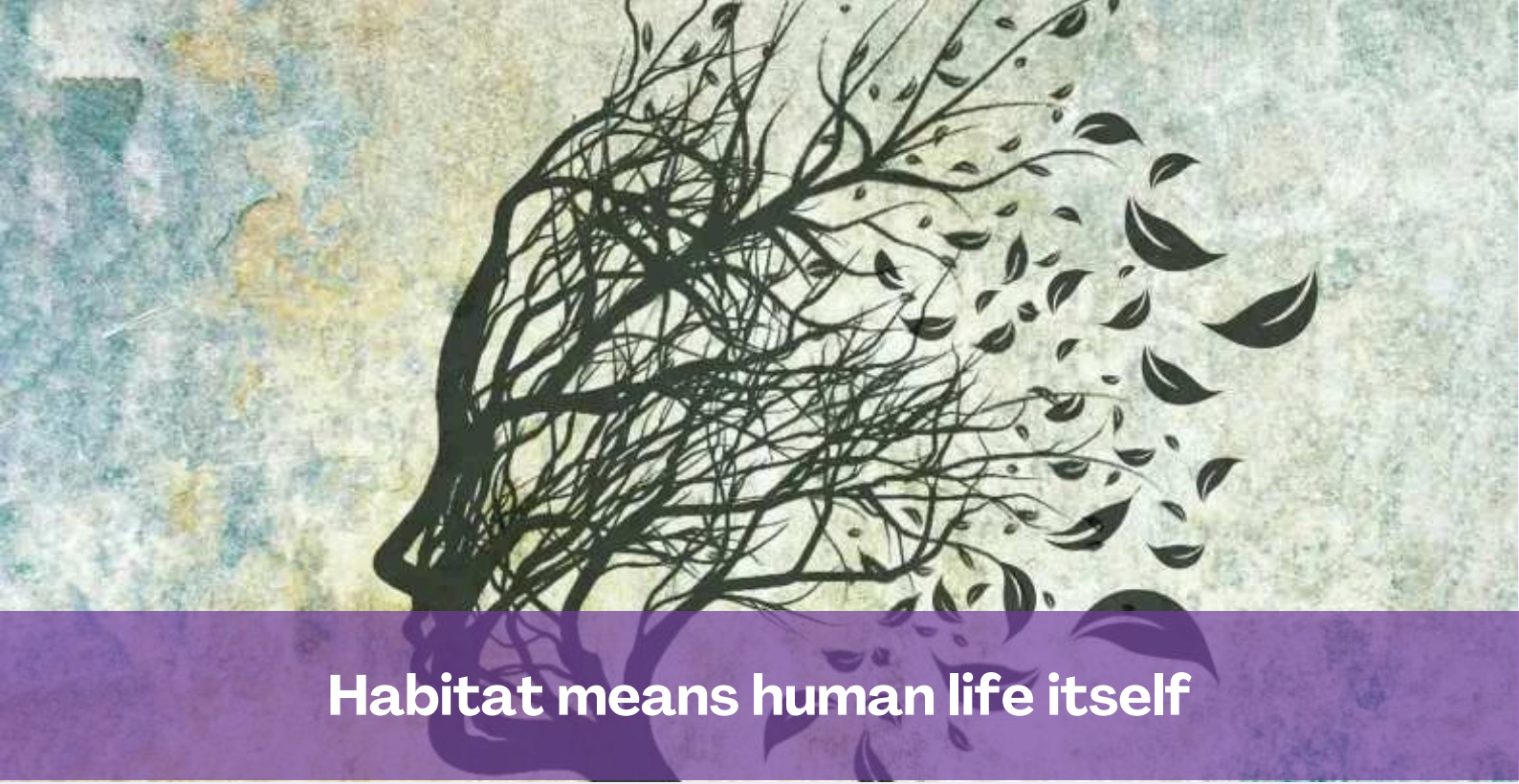
From my experience in Rojava, I can say : the relationship women have with nature is radically different from the relationships offered by capitalist modernity and the patriarchal system. Women carry a deep knowledge and sensitivity to the rhythms of

nature, the cycle of the soil, and the flow of water. This knowledge is not just folklore or nostalgia for the past; it is also a force of resistance and reconstruction for the future.

An ecological future can only be built through participatory and collective models led by women and involving all sectors of society. The experience of Rojava shows that this is possible and, despite the challenges, creates a powerful transformative force.

Berivan Omer

Co-Chairman of Qamishlo
Municipality



Habitat means human life itself

Iran is one of the 20 countries in the world most exposed to ecological threats. This ranking comes from recent years and continues to rise due to worsening environmental conditions and ecological disasters. Droughts, floods, forest fires, and other crises have put the country at severe risk. In this article, I will outline the causes of these disasters, their consequences, and explore possible solutions for a more sustainable and just future.

In the past fifty years, around 34,000 villages and rural settlements in Iran have been evacuated or abandoned - residents have been forced to leave their homes. This kind of forced migration has

devastating effects - leaving thousands of people to suffer without end. Widespread displacement - not only leads to poverty - but breaks the morale and spirit of the society as a whole. I want to highlight the situation in specific regions of Iran and Eastern Kurdistan to show what this looks like in real terms.

The first example is Lake Urmia: The drying up of Lake Urmia has been a cause for concern for several years. This aridification was driven by unchecked dam construction, the development of highways across the lake, and the irresponsible exploitation of its water resources. The natural beauty of Kurdistan is under existential threat. Dust clouds i

n the region are increasing and the cumulative impact is pushing plant and animal species toward extinction.

Next, let's turn to eastern Iran: In South Khorasan Province, nearly 1,900 villages have been abandoned due to the lack of water. Over 600 wells have dried up, and drinking water now has to be delivered by tanker. This rural exodus is pushing people into the cities, creating new complications - namely - overcrowding and rising unemployment. With joblessness on the rise and weak economic policies at the national level, poverty is also increasing - recent estimates place Khorasan's unemployment rate at around 11%, and it will likely continue to grow.

In addition to water scarcity and the challenges posed by dam construction, forest fires in the Zagros Mountains have become an escalating crisis. Though the government is alerted to these fires each year, it continues to turn a blind eye rather than address the issue directly. Even more troubling, recent arrests in the

region suggest the government is more intent on silencing dissent than on safeguarding the environment. These recurring fires are also partly influencing the shifting patterns of migration and the persistent impoverishment in the region.

Turning to the Ahvaz region: once among Iran's richest in natural resources and water - it now tells a different story. The project to divert water from this city to others has led to the drying up of many wetlands and rivers. With each year, more and more fine dust particles fill the air, causing dangerous levels of pollution. The loss of vegetation has made floods more severe, altering population patterns echoing trends observed elsewhere.

Despite these many challenges, society has responded with both caution and resilience. Environmental groups and activists continue to raise awareness and challenge the government's ineffective policies and their consequences. Though met with arrests and intimidation,

the environmental movement remains steadfast and determined. We must remember that our culture has deep roots in the places we call home. When the land is harmed, a part of our heritage fades with it. The destruction of the environment is also the erosion of who we are - without that connection, we risk losing a sense of belonging that grounds us.

Women, in particular, hold a vital place in this struggle. Their bond with the land is ancient - a strength that nurtures both nature and community. In their hands lies the power to protect the earth and shape the path ahead. We must not allow our home, our identity, and our culture to be stripped away from beneath us.

Sheyda Kerimi