

# THE IMRALI POST

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

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# Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

## Trees planted in Rojava to mark Öcalan's birthday

ANF | KOBANE | 2 APRIL 2023

On 4 April, the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, who has been held hostage in Turkey since 1999, turns 74. In Kurdistan, the people traditionally celebrate this day by planting trees under the motto "Every 4th of April, the hope for freedom will blossom anew".

In the autonomous region of Northern and Eastern Syria, tree planting campaigns are initiated every year around the birthday of the political representative of the Kurds. In Rojava, where Öcalan's paradigm of direct communal democracy with radical ecology and feminist emancipation is practised, people are convinced that ecological problems of our time can only be solved with a democratic society. Thus, the revolution of Rojava is also called an eco-revolution.

In Kobanê, the autonomous administration invited people to the village of Seftek on Sunday to plant a total of one hundred saplings of various tree species in the Öcalan Park there. "We celebrate the birthday of Abdullah Öcalan as an announcement of a free life - not only here in Rojava, but everywhere in the Near and Middle East," said Lutfiye Silêman, co-chair of the Shera district council, during a short march beforehand. Her greatest ideal, she said, was to make the struggle for the physical freedom of the influential theorist a success.

New trees were also planted in the women's village of Jinwar near Dirbêsiyê. The action was organised by a local group of the women's umbrella organisation Kongra Star. The activists planted about twenty peach, olive, pomegranate and almond trees and gave the villagers a photo of Öcalan. Jinwar is a magical attraction for people looking for a collective life. In the village built by women, an ecological economy, women's solidarity and a common and free life have been developed.

More trees were planted in Tirbespiyê, where women from Kongra Star initiated the action. They planted an area at the Şehîd Nezir Êzîdî Cemetery of Martyrs with various fruit trees and announced similar activities for the next few days in almost all regions of the north-eastern Syrian autonomous region.

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## Female guerrillas publish song for Abdullah Öcalan's birthday

ANF | 3 APRIL 2023

Female guerrillas published the song they sang on the occasion of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan's 74th birthday.

Women's freedom guerrillas expressed their feelings towards Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan with this song.

You can watch it from here: <https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/female-guerrillas-publishes-song-for-abdullah-ocalan-s-birthday-66409>

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## HPG and YJA Star guerrillas plant saplings to celebrate Abdullah Öcalan's birthday

ÎSER HAWAR / ARYEN AMARA | BEHDINAN | 3 APRIL 2023

The birthday of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan is on 4 April. The important day is being celebrated in Kurdistan and in many other places of the world, as well as in areas where HPG and YJA Star guerrillas are located.

Expressing their feelings and thoughts about 4 April during a special event they organized, the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrillas said that they wish to achieve the freedom of the Kurdish People's Leader in 2023.

The guerrillas participating in the celebration planted saplings wishing for the Kurdish People's Leader's freedom and a free future. The guerrillas, who often chanted "Bijî Rêber Apo" and "Jin, jiyana, azadi", ended the celebration by dancing halay.



## The '4 April Garden' opens in Qamishlo to mark Abdullah Öcalan's birthday

ANF | QAMISHLO | 4 APRIL 2023

The PYD office in Qamishlo opened the 4 April Garden in the neighbourhood of Hilêliye to mark the Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan's birthday.

Dozens of citizens, families of martyrs, PYD and Kongra Star members attended the garden opening ceremony.

Saplings were planted in the garden and photographs of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan were hung. The garden houses a library with Abdullah Öcalan's books.

The garden gate was opened by Şeha Hesare, the mother of Martyr Delîl from the YPG.



## Masses on their way to Amara to mark Öcalan's birthday block the Antep-Urfa highway

ANF | URFA | 4 APRIL 2023

Kurdish people, parties and organizations march every year to the village of Amara in the Halfeti district of Urfa province, where Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan was born on April 4, 1949.

The march "To Amara for Freedom" started today under the leadership of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), the Free Women's Movement (TJA), the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and the Federation of Law and Solidarity Associations for the Families of Detainees and Convicts (MED TUHAD FED).

Despite the police blockade, people from various cities of Kurdistan and Turkey gathered at the Payamlı crossroad on the Urfa-Antep highway, chanting slogans in favour of Öcalan.

Following the speeches by BP Co-Chair Saliha Aydeniz and DTK Co-Chair Berdan Öztürk who highlighted the importance of Öcalan's birthday for the Kurdish people, the crowd set out for Amara.

The convoy was stopped by the gendarmerie (military police) at the entrance of Yanaloba village in Suruç district.

In the face of the obstructions by the gendarmerie, the group blocked the Antep-Urfa highway and celebrated Öcalan's birthday with dancing and slogans.

The people dispersed after keeping the road closed to traffic for a long while as the military blockade continued.



## Activists protesting in front of UN demand “Freedom for Öcalan”

ANF | GENEVA | 5 APRIL 2023

A vigil by the Democratic Kurdish Community in Switzerland has been taking place in front of the UN headquarters in Geneva since 25 January 2021. Every Wednesday, activists march in front of the United Nations building to demand the release of Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan. The action is carried out as part of the 'Dem dema azadiye' [Time for Freedom] campaign. This week the focus of the protest event was the Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan's birthday on April 4.

Today's vigil began with a minute of silence in memory of the martyrs who fell fighting for the freedom of the Kurdish people and Kurdistan.

Speaking here, the co-chair of the Democratic Kurdish Community Center in Geneva (CDK), Erdal Atasoy, celebrated Öcalan's birthday, defining it as a historic day for the Kurds.

The people of Kurdistan were born with the birth of Öcalan,” said Atasoy and pointed out that this birth has influenced the entire world thanks to the struggle led by Kurdish women.

Atasoy stressed that Öcalan and the guerrillas became a hope not only for the Kurdish people in four parts of Kurdistan, but for all peoples around the world.

Atasoy criticized the UN's silence in the face of the isolation regime imposed on Öcalan and the massacres against the Kurds.

The vigil concluded with a call for participation in the central rally to take place in Dusseldorf on April 15.

The activists then turned their backs on the UN in protest at its silence on Öcalan's isolation and massacres in Kurdistan.



## Academics protest Hamburg University's decision to prevent 'We want our world back' conference

ANF | 6 APRIL 2023

The 'We want our world back' conference will go on as scheduled despite Hamburg University's decision to deny the rooms for the 2-day international event.

Political theorist and professor emerita Silvia Federici, wrote: "People all across the world are struggling for the freedom and dignity of their communities and their territories. Given today's urgent political, social, and ecological questions, the university should be the site where such people's voices are heard in order for new visions to be forged. The Hamburg University administration's decision to not only withdraw from hosting the Challenging Capitalist Modernity conference, but also doing so at the last minute is an alarming betrayal of this duty and responsibility."

Scottish writer James Kelman wrote: "This disgraceful action by the German authorities, and the cowardice of the University of Hamburg, bring shame and dishonor on the people of Germany. My sympathy is with them."

### **The conference will go on as scheduled**

The organizers have confirmed that the conference will go ahead as scheduled.

They wrote the following statement to explain the change of venues and new times:

"Thursday 6 April, we will start our programme. From 12:00 it will be possible to come to the Kurdish Cultural Association (Schulterblatt 55, 20357 Hamburg) and register there. From 16:00 we will then move to our main event rooms in the Bürgerhaus Wilhelmsburg, where registration will continue. There you will get all the information you need for the following days.

Capitalist modernity and its source, patriarchy, have brought us not only to the brink of the destruction of human society as we know it but also of our world. However, it is not all hopeless, if we take a collective stance, we may come out of the chaos with a better civilization — democratic civilization — but only if we do something about it now. We do not need to search for another world elsewhere; we want our world back!

On Thursday evening we will start our programme at 19:00 in the Bürgerhaus Wilhelmsburg. If participants arrive in Hamburg later than 21:00, they can meet at the Kurdish cultural association.

On Friday, 7 April, we will continue with our programme at the same location.

On Saturday, 8 April, we will continue with an extended workshop phase all day. It will be possible to participate in not just one but several workshops. The locations where the different workshops will take place will be announced shortly.

Call for a collective stance to demand our world back!

On Sunday, 9 April, the programme will again take place in the Bürgerhaus Wilhelmsburg and will end as planned with a closing speech at 17:00."

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## Families apply to visit their relatives on Imrali

ANF | 7 APRIL 2023

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

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

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

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

It came out on January 12 that the Bursa Execution Judge's Office had notified lawyers of a new three-month ban on family visits for Abdullah Öcalan and his fellow prisoners on 4 January. The action was described as a "disciplinary punishment", the motives and details of which, however, were not mentioned.

### Concerns increased after the CPT visit to Imrali

Concerns over the situation of the Kurdish people's leader increased after the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) visited Turkey on September 20-29. In a statement on 3 October, the CPT announced that Imralı F Type High Security Prison was among the institutions it visited.

However, Asrın Law Office reported that during the CPT visit, there was no meeting with Abdullah Öcalan, and that this increased their concerns. Asrın Law Office said on 29 November: "We have heard that Mr. Öcalan did not see the CPT delegation during its visit to Imrali Island in September 2022."

On 30 March, 2022, the CPT published its general report on its activities covering the year 2022. borders. In the course of 2022, the CPT organised 16 visits (totalling 140 days), including seven periodic visits and nine ad hoc visits. According to the report, CPT also visited the Imrali Island Prison, where Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan has been held since his arrest and handover to Turkey as a result of an international conspiracy in 1999. The report, however, did not provide any information on the conditions of

the Kurdish leader who has been held in incommunicado detention in violation of domestic and international laws and standards since his imprisonment.

### **Conditions of extraordinary isolation**

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

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

Despite all their attempts, lawyers from the Istanbul-based Asrın Law Office, which represents Abdullah Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners, have not been able to receive even a single sign of life from their clients since 25 March 2021. They could not obtain any information regarding their health status, their detention conditions, their legal situation in 2022. It has been 23 months that their clients have not been heard from in any way.

### **Öcalan held in solitary confinement since 1999**

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

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

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

### **Incommunicado detention**

The report by Asrın stated that their clients' situation was described as a form of "incommunicado" detention by the CPT in its report of 5 August 2020 (paras. 48 and 49). The CPT emphasized that such a state of affairs was unacceptable, urging the Turkish authorities to end it as soon as possible. "Incommunicado" detention means that the detainee or convict is completely prevented from any contact with the outside world and therefore cannot communicate with anyone, including his/her family, friends, and lawyers.

The “incommunicado” detention continued without interruption in 2022 despite lawyers’ weekly applications to the authorities in which they requested for the families and lawyers to be allowed to visit the prison. From 25 March 2021, the last date of contact with İmralı, until the end of 2022, a total of 238 applications for lawyer visits and another 79 applications for family/guardian visits were made. These applications were left without any response. Likewise, lawyers did not receive any letters, telegrams, or faxes from their clients during this period; nor was there any contact via phone.

### Restrictions through fabricated decisions

“After we applied to different international mechanisms, we learned from the government’s responses that our clients’ right to communicate via phone had been restricted for six months by decisions of the prison’s Management and Supervisory Board dated 18 October 2021, 30 March 2022, 9 May 2022 and 9 June 2022, respectively. These restriction orders were not communicated to the lawyers; the procedures were carried out secretly, bypassing the lawyers. Thus, it was understood that our clients’ right to communicate via phone is subject to periodic restrictions through fabricated decisions that are issued once every six months.

Moreover, we have not received any response to the numerous letters sent to our clients at regular intervals throughout the year. It is not known whether these letters were delivered to their addressees at all. In turn, we have also not received any letters, telegrams or faxes written by our clients in 2022.

In addition, the de facto and unlawful bans on family and lawyer visits that have been in place for many years have been maintained systematically and without cease so that not a single family or lawyer visit could take place in 2022. In this respect, 2022 was marked by the absolute impossibility of establishing any contact with our clients in İmralı Island Prison.”

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## International conference “We Want Our World Back” ends with “Jin Jiyan Azadi” slogan

JOHANNA FORES | HAMBURG | 10 APRIL 2023

The fourth international conference “Challenging capitalist modernity – we want our world back” ended late on Sunday afternoon in the event rooms of the Wilhelmburg community center in Hamburg. Around 1,300 participants from all over the world ended the conference chanting the slogan “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi”.

Four days full of knowledge exchange, discussion and networking. In a total of six sessions, activists and scientists from all over the world spoke about the diverse destruction of human and natural livelihoods by capitalism and how we can counter this with resistance, art, education and democratic confederalism.

## “They want to ban us because they are afraid of us and our ideas”

The conference was overshadowed by the short-term cancellation of the premises of the Hamburg University. Although the organizers had to find an alternative conference location within a week and adjust the schedule accordingly, the event was a success, not least thanks to the flexibility of the speakers and many helping hands. In all sessions, the university's decision and the criminalization by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution was heavily criticized: "They want to ban us because they are afraid of us and our ideas," said the sociologist John Holloway.

## Analyses and struggles against the destructive logic of the capitalist system

The conference began on Thursday evening with some opening speeches. On Friday morning, Kurdish and Irish artists presented a joint dance performance, followed by loud applause from the audience. Spread over the weekend, a total of more than 30 international speakers spoke about their analysis and struggles against the destructive logic of the capitalist system and what kind of community organizing can push back this. The program on Saturday took place at different locations in Hamburg; the Gängeviertel, the Rote Flora and the Centro Sociale. In 23 different workshops, the participants were able to exchange ideas about Jineolojî, history and resistance, art, mythology, Armenian history and Marx and Öcalan's analyses, or network with each other in the Govend, the Kurdish dance.

## We are the 99 percent!

At the end of the conference, Havin Guneser, spokeswoman for the international initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan - Peace in Kurdistan" and translator of the works of the Kurdish theorist, summarized the contents of the past few days: "Together we dreamed of a better world! We know how important it is to connect. We are the 99 percent! We are the producers of life and love!" She also gave a heartfelt greeting to Abdullah Öcalan, whose ideas continue to reach and enrich us despite his isolation. Finally, she thanked all the organizations, associations, structures, translators, speakers and individuals who made this conference possible and all the families who hosted and cared for the participants.

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## Activists from Lausanne and Geneva take over Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Vigil in Strasbourg

ANF | STRASBOURG | 12 APRIL 2023

The Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Vigil was launched on 25 June 2012 in Strasbourg, in order to ensure the physical freedom of the Kurdish People's Leader and to break the absolute isolation imposed on him. The vigil continues in its 564th week.

Nurettin Turgut, İsa Turan and Fırat Orhan, who came from the Swiss cities of Lausanne and Geneva, took over the vigil.

Group Spokesperson Nurettin Turgut underlined that Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan has been in heavy isolation for 24 years and has not been allowed to be heard from in any way for 2 years. "We have fears and anxieties about our Leader. We have not heard from our Leader for 2 years. Of course, the responsible and partner of this isolation is not just the Turkish state. We know that the Turkish state is fascist, and that it carries out all kinds of violence against the Kurdish people. If the international powers, the European Parliament, NATO, even the United Nations and many other international institutions did not remain silent and did not approve, this isolation would not have been implemented, our Leader would have gained his freedom and he would have been among us. But unfortunately, all of these dirty policies are common. Our request is to receive news from our Leader and to end the isolation imposed on him. At the same time, we want our Leader to be among us. We are in Strasbourg, in front of the European Parliament, to break the isolation and liberate our Leader. We have been keeping our vigil for 11 years, and we will continue to do so."



## Thousands rally in Düsseldorf for "Freedom for Öcalan"

ANF | DUSSELDORF | 15 APRIL 2023

Thousands of people rally for the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan in Düsseldorf. The participants have travelled from all over Germany and nearby countries to demand immediate contact with Öcalan. The Kurdish leader has been held incommunicado on the prison island of Imrali in the Turkish Sea of Marmara since 1999, and there has been no sign of him for over two years.

Since the morning, activists have gathered in front of the DGB building in Düsseldorf, dancing and shouting slogans. After the opening rally, a demonstration procession was formed, led by the slogan "Freedom for Öcalan". The march will continue until the Rhine meadows, where the demand will be reiterated at a final rally. More than fifty organisations with a Kurdish-Turkish background have called for the demonstration. At the same time, actions with the same demand are taking place in several European cities.



## Bayik: We demand freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

ANF | DUSSELDORF | 16 APRIL 2023

Thousands of people demonstrated in Düsseldorf on Saturday demanding freedom for Abdullah Öcalan. The demonstration march went from the main station to the Rheinpark and was led by women who carried banners reading "Freedom for Öcalan".

At the end of the rally, a minute's silence was held in memory of those who died in the Kurdish liberation struggle. The co-chairs of the Kurdish umbrella organization KON-MED, Zübeyde Zümrüt and Engin Sever, welcomed the crowd from the stage. Other speeches were given by PYD politician Foza Yüsif, KNK

chair Zeynep Murad, Esra Güler on behalf of the Union of Democratic Forces, KCDK-E chair Yüksel Koç and TJK-E spokeswoman, Ayten Kaplan.

The KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) co-Chair Cemil Bayık also addressed the participants of a demonstration. In his video message, Cemil Bayık called on the international powers to refrain from insisting on the 100-year-old policy of the Lausanne Treaty and encouraged the Kurdish people and their international friends to increase their struggle for the physical freedom of Abdullah Öcalan:

“Dear people and respected international friends, I would like to greet you all with love and respect. I would like to pay my respects to all of you and wish you success. As you know, during this year’s March 8 and Newroz celebrations, but also during the Week of the Heroes [in remembrance of the fallen of the revolution in Kurdistan], our people and their international friends carried out many protests which were marked by great enthusiasm and morale. Your demonstration today is the continuation and peak of these protests. This demonstration for the physical freedom of Leader Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] has a historic meaning. It is well-known that the Kurdish people have regained their identity because of Leader Apo by struggling alongside him and by developing themselves into a nation. The occupying and genocidal enemy is carrying out a policy of genocide against the Kurdish people, especially through its approach towards Leader Apo. This is how they take their revenge on Leader Apo. As you know, a policy is being carried out against our movement and our people. They want to destroy our movement, carry out a genocide against our people and thus achieve their desired results. No matter how much they have tried this, Leader Apo, the guerrilla and our people have stood heroically against this policy. They have put up historic resistance and continue to do so. Thus, they have defeated the policy carried out by the genocidal forces and obstructed their policy.

The phase we are currently going through is both important and critical. Because if we want to achieve results now, everyone must take responsibility and act according to their means. Then we can achieve our desired results. The fate of Turkey lies in the hands of the [Labor and Freedom] Alliance in the upcoming elections. I am convinced that this alliance will fulfill its historic role in the elections for both the Kurds and all the peoples of Turkey. The alliance and all democratic forces need to finally bring about the end of the AKP/MHP government. Because we have brought this government to an end with our struggle and resistance. Now the [Labor and Freedom] Alliance must complete this in the elections. Leader Apo has resisted against the occupying and genocidal Lausanne alliance [reference to forces behind the Lausanne Treaty signed on July 24, 1923] and against the International Conspiracy [involving the illegal abduction of Abdullah Öcalan by international powers on February 15, 1999] under very difficult conditions in captivity. His resistance and struggle have caused important developments among the Kurdish people, their international friends, Kurdish women, socialists and democrats.

We are now approaching the 100th anniversary of the Lausanne alliance. It is well-known that through this alliance the denialist policy and the genocide against our people are being kept alive. Yet, Rêber Apo [Abdullah Öcalan], the PKK and the Kurdish people have defeated the Lausanne alliance through their struggle. They have rendered this alliance meaningless. The Kurdish people no longer want to live according to the Lausanne Treaty. They want to live freely. This is their clear decision. Today, everyone must accept this decision of our people. In its history, the Kurdish people have always fought against genocidal forces and occupiers. Whenever they saw the opportunity, they took up the fight against these forces. Genocidal forces and invaders, on the other hand, have attacked our people and their struggle many times. They attacked the struggling movements and leaders of our people. They executed some of them, while

they threw others into prison or exiled them. They have executed, imprisoned and exiled many of our people. Şêx Saîd, Seyîd Riza, Qazî Mihemed, Şêx Abdusselam Barzani... These people have gained a place in history due to their efforts and struggle for the Kurdish people. Just like the genocidal forces and occupiers hanged these leaders, they also wanted to execute Rêber Apo. But they did not dare. Because Rêber Apo had already become part of the hearts of the Kurdish people. Millions of people had accepted him. And they had started to struggle based on the politics developed by him. Today, Rêber Apo's philosophy, thoughts and political ideology are accepted and supported not only by the Kurdish people but also internationally. This is the reason why these forces did not execute Leader Apo. Millions of people support him today. People like Rêber Apo are rare both in the history of the Kurdish people and in the history of humanity.

For the last 50 years, maybe even more, we have been waging a struggle. This struggle continues uninterrupted. It has developed based on the paradigm of Leader Apo, the paradigm of the democratic nation. This paradigm makes the solution to the problems of all peoples possible. It is based on democratic society, ecology and women's freedom. The framework of this paradigm is Democratic Confederalism while its way for a solution is democracy both on a national and local level.

Rêber Apo and the Kurdish people are one. No one can separate them anymore. Our people always say 'Bê Serok Apo jiyane nabe' ['Life without Serok Apo is impossible']. This expresses today's reality of Rêber Apo and the Kurdish people. Rêber Apo has been imprisoned in Imrali [prison island in Turkey] for 24 years. He is faced today with total isolation and huge brutality. We have not heard from him for two years. We do not know what his current condition is. Rêber Apo's current situation is a reason to increase our struggle for freedom. That is why we must free him physically. Everyone needs to know that we will not accept anything other than the physical freedom of Leader Apo. The Kurdish people and their international friends, the Kurdish women and youth are fighting for the physical freedom of Leader Apo with all their energy and strength. And they will increase their struggle even more from now on. This struggle has been going on for years and it will continue until we achieve our desired results. Rêber Apo's situation is a reason for all of us to increase our struggle everywhere. We need to wage a huge struggle so that we can achieve Leader Apo's physical freedom.

I would therefore like to appeal to all intellectuals, artists, civil organizations, revolutionaries, democrats, socialist forces and leftists to fulfill their duties and responsibilities with regards to the physical freedom of Rêber Apo. All of them need to make efforts to raise this struggle in the international political, diplomatic and legal arena. The CPT, the Council of Europe, the European Union, organizations working on international law and international human rights organizations need to fulfill their duties and responsibilities.

I would like to greet everybody who took part in today's demonstration and wish all of you success. Bijê Rêber Apo! [Long live Rêber Öcalan!]"

## Abdullah Öcalan's book "Sociology of Freedom" presented in Milan

ANF | MILAN | 16 APRIL 2023

The book "Sociology of Freedom" by Abdullah Öcalan was presented in Milan. The book is the third volume of Öcalan's "Manifesto of Democratic Civilisation", written between 2007 and 2010 on the prison island of İmralı. The Italian edition is published by Punto Rosso under the title "Sociologia della Liberta".

Many interested people attended the book launch. Roberto Mapelli from the Punto Rosso publishing house welcomed those present and gave an insight into the work of Abdullah Öcalan. Afterwards, representatives of the Kurdish Committee in Italy and the women's solidarity network Rete Jin spoke.

John Holloway, who teaches sociology at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla in Mexico and, among other things, wrote the much-discussed book "Changing the World Without Taking Power" (2002), which has been translated into many languages, participated in the event online.

In the speeches, the teachings of Abdullah Öcalan were described as hope for the liberation struggle of the oppressed and a call was made to fight against the isolation of the Kurdish leader. It was underlined that the paradigm of Democratic Confederalism put forward by Öcalan is being put into practice in the autonomous region of Northern and Eastern Syria and that the culture of a society based on women's liberation, ecology and grassroots democracy is increasingly being established.

The event ended with songs performed by Italian and Kurdish musicians.

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## Prisons in Turkey

### 13 detainees have lost their lives in prisons since the beginning of 2023

ANF | ISTANBUL | 1 APRIL 2023

The Human Rights Association (IHD) Prisons Commission held a press conference at the IHD Headquarters regarding the deaths in prisons. IHD chair Eren Keskin attended the press conference.

Nuray Çevirmen, the co-spokesperson of the IHD Prisons Commission, said that there are 349,893 detainees in 399 open and closed prisons in the country. She added that 13 detainees, 2 of them women,

have lost their lives since the beginning of 2023. According to the co-spokesperson, 4 detainees lost their lives due to illness and 4 others were killed by a firearm. The death of 6 of the prisoners is considered suspicious.

Çevirmen pointed out that as a result of the riot that broke out in Hatay T Type Closed Prison after the earthquake on 6 February, 12 detainees were injured and taken to hospital, while 3 of them lost their lives.

Çevirmen also drew attention to the family's statement about the suspicious death of 26-year-old Duygu Koral, who was imprisoned in Kandıra No. 1 F Type Closed jail.

Providing information about Yılmaz Ekinci, who died under suspicious circumstances in Aydın E Type Prison, the IHD executive said: "A case could be filed as a result of the appearance of footage showing Ekinci being tortured by the guards. In the case that was heard on 28 March 2023, the court rejected all requests to hear witnesses.

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## HDP former Amed MP Baluken released from prison

ANF | 5 APRIL 2023

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) former Amed MP Idris Baluken was released from prison after completing his execution. Baluken, who was jailed on 4 November 2016 while he was HDP group deputy chair, was tried in Diyarbakır 8th High Criminal Court and sentenced to 9 years and 2 months in prison. Baluken was released from prison after the verdict of release given at the hearing held on 30 January 2017. However, upon the objection of the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, Baluken was arrested again on 21 February 2017, just 22 days after being freed, and sent to prison.

Baluken, who completed his sentence, was released from Sincan Prison after 6 years, 5 months and 1 day.

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## 68 female prisoners urge the CPT to stop deaths in Turkey's prisons

ANF | 17 APRIL 2023

68 political women prisoners in Sincan Women's Closed Prison in Ankara sent a letter to the CPT, raising concern over the suspicious deaths in prisons and the increase in the number of prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment.

The letter addressed the death of Abdullah Oran (63) who was held in Sincan Prison for 2 years and died on March 19. The letter revealed Oran's death was recorded as a "heart attack", while the causes of deaths of the murdered prisoners were recorded as "sickness or suicide".

### 'The state is responsible for every death in prison'

The letter pointed out that the earthquakes in February and the election campaigns overshadowed the systematic torture in prisons. It continued: "As 68 political prisoners in Ankara Sincan Women's Closed Prison, we are deeply concerned about the situation in prisons, especially for the prisoners who are kept in solitary confinement. The state, which paves the way for more deaths and does not take precautions, is responsible for every death in prisons. More alarmingly, the systematic increase in deaths is an indication that there is a state policy that causes deaths. If this situation continues, deaths will spread over time and all of us, especially our friends who are kept in solitary confinement, will suffer the same fate.

### 'Stop deaths in prisons'

We urge the CPT to stop deaths as soon as possible in prisons, to carry out the necessary investigations and prosecutions, and to inform the public about the situation in prisons that have become torture centres. Our most urgent request is that the CPT should stop these policies."

68 women prisoners submitted the letter in Turkish and English to the CPT.



## Court keeps Kurdish journalists in prison

ANF | AMED | 17 APRIL 2023

On 8 June, six media outlets, including two news agencies, Mezopotamya Agency (MA) and JinNews, and Kurdish-language newspaper Xwebûn, were searched in Amed as part of an "investigation" conducted by the Diyarbakir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office against twenty journalists and two other persons. The production companies Piya, Ari and Pel were also targeted in the operation. The media materials in these facilities were confiscated by the police, and the confiscated cameras were presented to the anti-terror police department as evidence of membership in a terrorist organisation. After 8 days in custody, 16 journalists out of 22 people detained in the operation were sent to prison on 15 June for alleged membership of a terrorist organisation. The alleged "terrorist organisation" to which the media workers are claimed to belong is the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The jailed journalists are the director of the women's news agency JinNews, Safiye Alagaş, the co-chair of DFG (Dicle Fırat Journalists' Association), Serdar Altan, the editor of the Mezopotamya News Agency (MA), Aziz Oruç, two editors of the Kurdish-language newspaper Xwebûn, Mehmet Ali Ertaş and Zeynel Abidin Bulut, presenter and former MA editor Ömer Çelik, presenters Neşe Toprak and Elif Üngür, cameramen Mazlum Doğan Güler, Ibrahim Koyuncu, Abdurrahman Öncü, Suat Doğuhan, Ramazan Geciken, Lezgin Akdeniz and Mehmet Şahin, and Remziye Temel, accountant of Piya Production.

JinNews editor Gülşen Koçuk, Esmer Tunç, Mehmet Yalçın, Kadir Bayram, Feynaz Koçuk and Ihsan Ergülen were released under reporting conditions.

10 months later, an indictment was prepared against 18 journalists, demanding a prison sentence ranging from 7 years, 6 months to 15 years on charges of "being a member of a terrorist organization", meaning the PKK.

The indictment prepared by the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office was accepted by the Diyarbakır 4th High Criminal Court. The court will hold the first hearing on July 11.

After its first examination of the file, the court decided to keep jailed journalists in prison.



## Military aggression and occupation

### Turkey and its mercenaries want to eliminate the Yazidis

ANF | QAMISHLO | 6 APRIL 2023

The Cizre region Yazidi House condemned the mercenary groups forcing the Yazidis in Afrin to convert to Islam by threatening them.

A statement was read in front of the Amûdê Yazidi House. Yazidi House members and dozens of Yazidi citizens attended the press conference. The statement was read by Cizre Region Yazidi House co-chair Leyla Mehmo.

The statement pointed out that mercenary groups used new repression methods against the existence, history and demographic structure of the Yazidis. The statement condemned the threats against the Yazidi community in Afrin and called on human rights organizations to take immediate action to prevent these crimes that will lead to the extinction of the Yazidis.

The statement also condemned the handing over of guerrilla Harun Elbak to Turkey and issued a call to the people to recognize the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria, which spreads the solidarity that protects human dignity, and rejects instability and oppression.



## Latest developments in Afrin

MUSTAFA ÇOBAN | SHEHBA | 6 APRIL 2023

Afrin, also known as Çiyayê Kurmênc, is a city located in the western part of Rojava, 63 km away from Aleppo and 90 percent of its residents are Kurds (pre-occupation figures). Before it was occupied by the Turkish state after intense attacks in 2018, Yazidis, Arabs and Armenians lived in unity and solidarity in the city, which has 6 districts and nearly 400 villages... Despite being exposed to a massive migration wave from Syria's other cities such as Aleppo, Deraa, Homs, Idlib, Hama and Raqqa in 2011, the city maintained peace and stability for Syria as well. It was also a potential economic hub.

The hegemonic powers that regarded the democratic management model in North-East Syria as a threat to their own interests, found a pretext and made the fascist Turkish Republic to invade Afrin on January 20, 2018 under the name "Operation Olive Branch". With this attack, fascist chief Erdogan was planning to invade the city with his army in a few days. However, an outstanding resistance was put up for 58 days under the leadership of YPG and YPJ forces with a broad participation of the people.

### From genocide to demographic change

Turkey has more than 50 military bases in the city which has been under occupation for more than 5 years. Moreover, various crimes including kidnapping, pillage, theft, torture, rape, cultural historical genocide and demographic change have been committed in almost all the streets of the city. Around 700 civilians have been tortured and killed, and around 9,000 others have been kidnapped. These figures cover only the crimes that were reported. There are also those whose whereabouts remain unknown. Furthermore, many media outlets and human rights organizations revealed that more than 100 historical sites were plundered and nearly 400,000 trees were cut down in the city.

Four Kurds from the same family, Ferhan Osman (43), İsmail Osman (38), Muhammed İsmail (18) and Muhammed Osman (42), who lit a fire to celebrate Newroz on March 20 in the Jindires district of the city, were brutally murdered and three others were injured. A Turkey-backed paramilitary organization called Ahrar al-Sharqiya was claimed to have carried out the attack. 10 days after the incident, in a video it was seen that two Yazidis, Şêxo Arif and Heyder Arif from the village of Qîbarê in the Shera district, were forced to convert to Islam by the so-called sheikhs of the association called 'Al Waqif'. Some pro-occupation individuals and institutions started to spread the images of both events through their social media accounts. This has caused suspicions.

### Is it a joint plan?

As the centennial of the Treaty of Lausanne which divided Kurdistan is looming, it is predicted that some plans have been put into effect, which may further escalate the situation. According to this plan of which the KDP, which has maintained its dirty relations with the fascist AKP-MHP government for nearly 20 years, is a partner, a regime will be established in Afrin under the leadership of ENKS (the organization that denies the demographic change in Afrin) and Al Nusra in order to harness Turkey-backed mercenary groups. The plan can also be seen as a preliminary step for a new invasion of Rojava, where Turkish drone and artillery attacks continue. For the last few years, Turkish intelligence service head Hakan Fidan and his

Syrian counterpart, Ali Mamluk, have frequently met in secret meetings. In recent talks, the government of Damascus made an offer that 'ENKS can be recognized in Afrin'. These developments show that the government of Damascus is a partner in these plans. The most dramatic part of all these vicious plans was that some Kurds were sacrificed by the Turkish state and its collaborators.

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## Yazidi forces hold first conference: “We will never renounce the struggle for freedom”

ANF | SHENGAL | 6 APRIL 2023

The Yazidi town of Shengal (Sinjar) is taking an important step to strengthen its self-defence system for an autonomous and free Shengal. The Asayîşa Êzîdxanê (Yazidi security forces), which was established under the name of Shengal Defence Force in July 2016 after the Yazidi genocide, is holding its first conference today.

A total of 300 people are attending the conference, including all components of Shengal, institutions and organizations under the Autonomous Administration, TAJÊ (Yazidi Women's Freedom Movement), Yazidi Youth Union, Families of Martyrs, guests and delegates.

The conference is being held in memory of the Shengal Resistance Units (YBŞ) commanders Pîr Çeko, Agir Cefri and Asayîşa Êzîdxanê official Şerzad Şemo who were martyred in an attack organized by the invading Turkish state and its collaborator KDP at the beginning of March.

### 'We will never renounce the struggle for freedom'

The opening speech of the conference, which started after a moment of silence in memory of the Kurdistan Freedom Martyrs, was delivered by Heso Ibrahim, Co-Chair of the Shengal Autonomous Executive Board. Ibrahim said: “Since 2018, we have witnessed the martyrdom of many pioneering figures and heroes who sought to reinforce the Yazid faith. They sacrificed their lives for this cause. Even if we are forced to sacrifice our children, our property and our lives for this cause, we will never renounce the struggle for freedom.”

Addressing the importance of the month April, which marks the beginning of the new year for the Yazidi people, Ibrahim said: “We hope that this year will be a good, fruitful, hopeful and free year for all the Yazidi people. We have experienced many difficulties. The enemy wants to destroy our faith and will. Thanks to the martyrs, we have managed to keep this faith alive. A dirty policy is being pursued against our people and we will fight it to the end.”

### October 9 agreement

Ibrahim continued: “With the October 9 Agreement, they sought to subject us to a new genocide. We have been exposed to various methods such as special warfare and spying. So far, they have not been able

to implement this agreement seeking a new genocide. This agreement was hampered thanks to the resistance of the autonomous administration's institutions and all the components of Shengal. Today, they want to impose a new policy on Shengal and the Yazidis. They want to revive the October 9 Agreement once again through the Spiritual Assembly and Mir. We hope that those traitors will not be allowed to return to Shengal. We call on all Yazidis not to contribute to the enemy.”

### **Yazidis should let the traitors pass**

Ibrahim concluded: “Now they want to present themselves as the liberators of Shengal and the Yazidi people by making propaganda movies. However, everyone knows that the peshmerga did not fire a single bullet to defend Shengal. Once again, they want to convert the Yazidis to Islam. However, our faith is very ancient. No one can destroy our faith by making movies and converting two Yazidi families to Islam. The Yazidis should let the traitors pass by standing shoulder to shoulder with each other. There are traitors in every nation, but those traitors should never be among us. There is no treachery in Yazidism.”

After the opening speech, Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan's ideas concerning the Yazidi people and Shengal's defence were read out.

The conference includes a cine-vision screening, reading of the reports, speeches and messages from the guests, updating Asayîşa Êzîdxanê's regulations, decision making and planning.

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## **Violations committed in occupied NE Syria territories by Turkey and its mercenaries in March**

ANF | 7 APRIL 2023

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) Media Center released its report about the violations carried out by Turkey and its mercenaries in the territories they occupy in Northern and Eastern Syria. The report covers the violations for the month of March.

The report said that "the Turkish occupying army and its mercenary factions persist in committing human rights violations against the remaining population in the occupied territories. The occupation aims to effect demographic change in these areas through the forced displacement of the indigenous population and the construction of settlements for its mercenaries."

The report added that "during the last month of March, many violations were documented that affected the people, their properties, trees, and water in the occupied areas of Afrin, Sari Kaniyeh/Ras al-Ain, and the safe areas covered by the ceasefire agreement in the north and eastern Syria."

Highlights from the report are as following:

## **Killing, arresting, and assaulting**

On March 20, terrorists from the so-called Ahrar al-Sharqiya (which is enlisted on the terrorism list) killed four civilians from the same family as they were lighting a fire to celebrate Nowruz Day.

The following day, the same group raided the village of Al-Zaybakia in the occupied countryside of Tal Abyad, kidnapped the civilian Muhammad Ali Osman, and took him to an unknown location.

In the occupied district of Jandrisa, which was already devastated by an earthquake, Turkish mercenaries severely beat the civilian Ibrahim Khalil Khorshid in the middle of the street, claiming he was looking at them. They then kidnapped him and took him to an unknown location.

On March 25, Hassan Mohamed Ali was also severely beaten and had his motorcycle stolen. He was taken to Jandisa Hospital for treatment.

In the village of Burj Haidar in the Shirawa district, mercenaries from the “Sham Legion” beat Yahya Haj Nasser and his wife.

In the village of Sarmasakh Fawqani in the Karki Laki district, the Turkish occupation army opened fire on the village, resulting in the deaths of four sheep belonging to villagers.

In a village in Maidana in the Rajo district, a Kurdish family consisting of a father, mother, and their young son were severely beaten by Faylaq al-Sham mercenaries.

Finally, on March 26, Turkish intelligence, with the participation of their mercenaries from the Amshat faction, arrested several young men who had participated in an uprising against the Turkish occupation that began in Gendaris.

## **Demographic change**

In March, the Turkish occupation increased its pace of settlement construction in the occupied region of Afrin. They took advantage of the earthquake disaster and relied on funds provided by Qatar and Muslim Brotherhood organizations.

On March 12, the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated group “Live in Dignity,” in partnership with an unnamed Turkish association, began establishing a new settlement in the village of Maratah in occupied Afrin.

The mercenaries of the “Sultan Othman” faction, in cooperation with the “Hamza” division, also rented homes that belonged to the displaced residents of Afrin to new settlers.

## **Cutting down trees**

In addition to their crimes against civilians, the Turkish occupation and its mercenary factions have also been engaging in a relentless campaign of cutting down trees in the occupied territories for profit. In the

village of Medanki, mercenary factions, including Faylaq al-Sham, Jaish al-Nukhba, Sultan Murad, and Ahrar al-Sham, cut down 270 trees, including olives, apricots, almonds, and walnuts. The mercenaries of “Sultan Suleiman Shah” also cut down dozens of walnut and almond trees that belonged to a civilian from the village of Koblka in the Sharra district of Afrin. The mercenaries of “Hamza,” which operates under direct orders from Turkish intelligence, completely cut down about 80 olive trees, including partially, in a field owned by a civilian from the village of Korka in the Jandires district. On March 13, Faylaq al-Sham mercenaries cut down 50 old olive trees from an orchard owned by a civilian from the village of Basoufan in the Shirawa district.

### **Stealing humanitarian aid and imposing taxes**

The Turkish occupation and its mercenaries have stolen humanitarian aid meant for those affected by earthquakes in the occupied territories, depriving Kurds of crucial assistance.

In Serê Kaniyê/Ras al-Ain, both mercenary factions and the local council have stolen incoming aid, replacing it with bags of charcoal. Meanwhile, the “Mohammed Al-Fateh” mercenaries reportedly imposed royalties on owners of agricultural tractors and cars belonging to residents of Ma'malo village in the Rajo district of occupied Afrin.

### **Bombing the safe areas**

Throughout March, the Turkish occupation and its mercenary factions continued their indiscriminate bombing campaign on safe cities and towns, including those covered by the ceasefire agreement. The villages of Ain Issa, such as Saida, the international road M4, Taiba, Ain Issa camp, al-Sakir rest house, Jdeideh, Fatsa, and silos were targeted multiple times, along with the villages of Klutiya and Gundi Mazin in the Shirawa district of Al-Shahba and Afrin, respectively. The Turkish occupation army also used artillery to bomb Irshadiya in the Sharra district and Dirnti in the Shahba district.

In Kobani, the Turkish occupation used artillery and mortar shells to bombard the area between the villages of Kharbastan and Gorran, as well as the villages of Bagdik and Kuldeb, causing injuries to civilians and the destruction of homes.

On March 24, heavy artillery was used to shell the villages of Al-Kozlia, Sheikh Ali, and the graves of Al-Qarajneh in Tal Tamir.

### **Cutting off water**

Additionally, in the first half of March, the Euphrates River level reached critical lows, resulting in a decrease in the water supply to the Euphrates Dam and power outages. This situation forced rural residents to rely on contaminated water sources, leading to epidemics. The water cuts at the Alouk station in Seret Kaniyeh/Ras al-Ain worsened the situation, as it is the main source of drinking water for the city of al-Heseke."

## Annual meeting of HPG Command Council and PKK Defence Committee held

ANF | BEHDINAN | 7 APRIL 2023

In a statement on Friday, the Command Council of the People's Defense Forces (HPG) said the following:

“We held our annual HPG Command Council and PKK Defence Committee meeting between 20-27 February 2023 with the participation of a sufficient number of council members representing all our administration, ground, state and institution commands to examine in depth the battles of 2022 which marked the most comprehensive and fierce war year in our history, to focus creatively on the tactics that brought success, to overcome the problems and inadequacies of the Revolutionary People's War and to put forward the planning of the next year.

Our meeting took place at a time when the 6 February Pazarcık and Elbistan earthquakes devastated our people. One of the topics in our meeting was the evaluation of this earthquake. As is known, our movement announced its inaction decision on February 10 as a moral, humanitarian and social attitude in the face of the severe consequences of the earthquake. As the HPG, we adhered to this decision as it was. However, the Turkish state, which is far from humanitarian values, continued its attacks by ignoring our moral attitude and respect for our dead. Our decision that relies on the approach and moral principles of our leader and Party is still in effect. On behalf of the Command Council, we offer our condolences to the families who lost their relatives in the earthquake, to all the Kurdish, Turkish and Arab peoples, and wish the injured a quick recovery. We call on all our people and democratic forces to expand and strengthen solidarity.

### 2022 went down in the history of freedom

Our meeting, which took place at a time when our struggle for freedom is going through a historical and strategic process, discussed the 2022 struggle year in a very comprehensive way. Overcoming the inadequacies based on the lessons taken from this important process, which was experienced as a great year of resistance and struggle, paved the way for a more creative and successful practice of our tactical perspective which has been proven in practice. The meeting clarified the perspective and practical principles to succeed in 2023 with certainty based on the lessons of 2022 in which our tactical direction, expressed only in theory, was proven in practice. Our meeting, marked by the memory of our freedom fighters Sara and Rûken, and our martyrs in Zap, Avaşîn, Metina, Cudî, Gabar, Besta, Dersim, Serhat, Garzan and Amed, determined that the year 2022 went down in the history of freedom when self-sacrifice reached its peak with unique examples of heroism.

Our HPG Command Council and PKK Defence Committee meeting determined that the recent years we passed through were critical years that can never be considered ordinary. The war process that developed especially in the Medya Defence Zones has opened a new era not only for the Kurdistan Freedom Struggle, but also for the freedom struggles of the peoples and the guerrilla warfare doctrine. In line with the Revolutionary People's War Strategy, democratic modernity guerrilla warfare has proven its potential to defend free areas should tunnel battles and mobile team tactics are performed correctly and effectively.

This situation reinforced the belief in victory, self-confidence and success among our command and fighting forces. In this sense, the struggle in the Medya Defence Zones yielded very valuable results for the future and achievements of our people, as well as for the peoples of the region and the anti-system forces seeking to resist the hegemonic forces. It has been strikingly revealed how guerrilla troops could resist modern technology and even protect their free lands from banned weapons in the 21st century.

### **Self-defence must be reinforced everywhere**

At our meeting, the view that the Revolutionary People's War Strategy should be carried out in a complete and integrated manner was strongly emphasized. The Revolutionary People's War also means the dissemination of moral-political principles and measures among the people from the bottom. In this context, the creation of the reality of a fighting people will defeat the enemy's concept of genocide. Our people must regard the defence of their lands as a matter of honour and existence. The war currently being waged is not just an ordinary war, but a battle for our people's existence and freedom. Therefore, our meeting concluded that our people should organize their lives with this awareness and reinforce their self-defense everywhere against the psychological warfare methods of the enemy.

### **The only succes criterion is Öcalan's phisical freedom**

At a time when we are going through a significant process for the freedom of our people, the decisions made during our meeting, which lasted eight days with intense and in-depth discussions, play a very important role in the success of 2023. Our meeting, which was held as we entered the 25th year of the International Conspiracy, determined that the only success criterion was the physical freedom of Öcalan by giving the criticism of insufficient comradeship once again, and it was decided that responsibilities should be assumed by relying on these principles.

As HPG and YJA Star commanders and fighters, we state that we will continue with great passion, an unshakable will, an unbreakable faith, a claim to victory and high determination to realize the freedom of our leader and our people with the Apoist self-sacrificing spirit of our immortalized heroic martyrs Sara Goyî, Rûken Zelal, Bager Gever, Avzem Çiya, Delil Zagros, Mizgîn Ronahî, Cîger Malazgirt, Rûbar Rojhilat, Mawa Roj, Nuri Yekta, Helbest Koçerîn, Baz Mordem, Doğan Jîrkî, Fedai Kobanê, Têkoşer Ezidi, Karkerî, Rojda, Nalîn, Rahime, Xebat, Zana, Evîndar, Aso, Harun and Rojbin. We wish our people and revolutionary democratic forces great success in their struggle for freedom.”

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## **KCK condemns the Turkish attack on Sulaymaniyah Airport**

ANF | BEHDINAN | 8 APRIL 2023

The Foreign Relations Committee of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) released a statement condemning Friday's Turkish attack on the airport in Sulaymaniyah city in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

The statement by the KCK Foreign Relations Committee includes the following:

“We are going through a significant historic process in the Kurdistan freedom struggle. In its genocidal war against our movement, patriotic circles and our people with all its might and every means available, the AKP-MHP fascism has come to the brink of dissolution and elimination. This heavy defeat it is experiencing is a result of the attitude of Leader Apo (Abdullah Öcalan), who manifests historic resistance on İmralı and the self-sacrifice of the guerrilla forces that are putting up a legendary resistance against all forms of banned weapons in the mountains of Kurdistan. The plan of the fascist chief Erdoğan, who seeks to institutionalize fascism and to cow society into submission, has been frustrated by the resistance of Kurdish women and youth at Newroz, rendering him unable to satisfy his desire. This fascist regime, which is gradually heading towards collapse, will be dealt a final blow by our people on May 14.

Experiencing a collapse and despair, the Erdoğan regime is likely to resort to any provocation since it has no capability left to gather masses around itself. Aware of the fact that the fascist Erdoğan is ready to commit any national and international crime in an attempt to remain in power, our movement has extended the decision for inaction it had declared on the occasion of the earthquake until after the May 14 elections. Nevertheless, the invading Turkish army increasingly continues its attacks on Medya Defense Zones, Rojava, Bashur (South Kurdistan), Shengal and the entire Kurdistan.

Having its plans foiled by our movement's decision for inaction, the invading Turkish state now uses the KDP and Bashur for its terrorist ambitions, targeting and attacking the areas used by our people in Bashur. The Turkish state, which pursues anti-Kurdish policies and has turned into an international gang and terrorist organization, is increasingly constituting a threat to the stability of the region. The Turkish state is constantly gathering together collaborationist forces as a cover for its terrorist aggression. These forces are the Ahrar al-Sham in Afrin; ISIS in Kobanê, FSA in Girê Sipî and Serêkaniyê; and the KDP in Shengal and Bashur.

At this stage, the KDP in the name of South Kurdistan has turned into the basic instrument of the Turkish state's terrorist aggression in four parts of Kurdistan. It would be difficult to explain the fact that the KDP, which became isolated within the Kurdistan community and the Bashur government, acts as a sponsor of Turkish terrorist crimes and makes an extraordinary effort to whitewash the Turkish Republic, as sole collaboration. Our movement has repeatedly expressed, with evidence, the support provided by the KDP in the Turkish state's deployment and establishment of military bases in Bashur and killing of Kurdistan Freedom Guerrillas with chemical weapons. Maintaining its betrayal against the Kurdish people, the KDP is now becoming a sponsor to the Turkish state targeting the Airport of Sulaymaniyah and threatening the civilian population. While all Kurds take these attacks as an occupation plan against the status of Bashur, the KDP justifies the Turkish state and encourages it for further attacks.

It is only obvious that the KDP knows no bounds in serving the interests of the Turkish state, becoming its partner in its enmity towards the Kurds and reporting everything that is for the good of the Kurds to the invading Turkish state. The crimes of corruption and collaboration with the invaders in the KDP-controlled areas are exposed by more cases every day. While the KDP does not allow a single activity that serves the Kurdish people in the areas it controls, it allows the Turkish army to move everywhere, provides them with logistics, builds roads for them and carries them to the positions of the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla. It is obvious that their actions are contrary to the values of the Kurdish people. So far, the KDP has justified its dirty relations with the Turkish state with the freedom struggle of our party. However, as can be seen from the statement of the so-called spokesperson of the Kurdistan Regional Government after

the attack on Sulaymaniyah Airport, the KDP is making every Kurd who does not submit to the Turkish state a target and encourages the Turkish state.

We strongly condemn the fascist Turkish state's April 7 attack on Sulaymaniyah Airport. On this occasion, we once again condemn the KDP that encourages these attacks and tries to cover up the crimes of the Turkish state. We believe it is essential that the Iraqi state and all Kurds adopt the necessary stand without delay to secure conditions for our people's freedom and security against this collaborating policy that makes the Turkish state a present of the status of South Kurdistan.

We salute the attitude of all Kurds and the people of Sulaymaniyah in the face of this rampant international terrorism. We believe that the people of South Kurdistan will show the necessary reaction to the colonialist occupation forces and their networks of traitors and adopt the line of national unity under all circumstances. We call on international forces and in particular the international anti-ISIS coalition to take a stand against the genocidal attacks Turkey carries out against the Kurds by trampling on international law."

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## Turkish soldiers' blockade in the villages of Yüksekova continues for 37 days

ANF | HAKKARI | 9 APRIL 2023

The operations launched by Turkish soldiers from 3 to 17 March in many villages and hamlets of Bajêrge (Esendere) town of Gever ( Yüksekova) district of Colemêrg continued on the 37th day. Four more villages were added to those already "banned" and put under blockade. The headmen of the villages of Soryan, Bilindbasan, Aryan and Golegîrî were called by the District Gendarmerie Command on 4 April and told that "all plateaus and pastures in the villages are prohibited until further notice". The reason for the decision was that an 'operation' would be carried out.

### Soldiers cut trees and set up a camp

According to some information, an operation will be carried out against the villages. Soldiers cut trees and set up camps in the villages of Qesran, Zêwe, Kawle Gund, Pagenk, Merdêsal and Êlê, which have been declared "special security zones" for 7 years.

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## Iraqi delegation in Sulaymaniyah to investigate the airport attack

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 9 APRIL 2023

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Sudani sent a delegation to investigate the Turkish state's attack on Sulaymaniyah International Airport.

The delegation, consisting of Iraqi National Security Advisor Kasım Ereci, Head of the National Security Unit Hamid Elşetri, Iraqi Anti-Terrorism Unit Head Abdulwahab Elsadi and Iraqi Joint Operations Command Deputy Elmehêmedawi, went to Sulaymaniyah and met with PUK chair Bafil Talabani.

At the meeting, Bafil Talabani stated that Iraqi President Mohammad Shiya Sudani has the responsibility of investigating the attack and asked for the results of the investigation to be shared with the public.

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## PUK adviser contradicts KDP statement on Turkish attack in Sulaymaniyah

ANF | 9 APRIL 2023

Burhan Rauf, communications advisor for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), spoke to RojNews on the Turkish drone attack on 8 April on the international airport in Sulaymaniyah. At around 4pm local time on Friday afternoon, an unmanned combat drone belonging to the NATO member Turkey attacked a convoy at the airport site in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), but apparently missed the target.

"Turkey's measures against Sulaymaniyah, such as the closure of the airspace and the attack on the airport, are dangerous developments. They are direct interventions in the internal affairs of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq," said the PUK advisor.

Turkey closed the airspace for flights to and from Sulaymaniyah earlier this week because of alleged threats from the PKK. Turkish media speculated that the closure of airspace was linked to the helicopter crashes in mid-March in the KRI. The crash of two aircraft that had taken off from the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria killed nine fighters from the SDF's counter-terrorist units on 15 March. The members of the YAT counter-terrorism units, which specialise in the fight against the jihadist militia ISIS, wanted to exchange security issues and military expertise with the PUK peshmerga in Sulaymaniyah when the two helicopters crashed due to bad weather conditions near Amadiya. Ankara threatened the PUK with "countermeasures" after the fatal accident, but without elaborating.

Rauf further stated, "This is a violation of Iraq's sovereignty, and it is the duty of the Iraqi government to protect sovereignty. As PUK, it is our duty to strongly condemn this attack and respond to Turkey's interventions through diplomatic, political and legal means."

In addition, the PUK's communications advisor also addressed the statement made after the drone attack on Friday by Cotyar Adil, the spokesperson for the KDP-dominated KRI government. Adil had blamed the PUK administration for "the general dangerous situation", referring to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, which had spoken of an increase in PKK terrorist activities in Sulaymaniyah on Wednesday. Ankara claimed that the organisation infiltrated the city's airport and threatened flight safety.

In response to Cotyat Adil's justification of the attack, Burhan Rauf said: "We do not consider this statement as a government statement. It is only the views of KDP ministers in the regional government and it is unacceptable to find an excuse for attacking a town in the region. Those who justify this attack will pay a heavy price. The town of Sulaymaniyah was attacked by Turkey because of its national stance."

Regarding the PUK's stance on national unity, Rauf said, "The PUK's stance on national problems has not changed in the past and today. It will continue to maintain this stance in the coming period." Rauf vehemently contradicted the KDP's accusation of the PUK supporting armed groups in Kurdistan: "This accusation is far from the truth. The PUK only establishes relations with the SDF, who are a member of the coalition against ISIS and have liberated Raqqa. It has often been emphasised worldwide that they are fighting for all humanity. The PUK maintains relations with them with the knowledge of the international coalition and the USA and in accordance with the decision of the Kurdistan Region Parliament. The KDP's statements are far from reality."



## Mazlum Abdi: Turkey and Erdogan did not achieve their goals with the Sulaymaniyah attack

ANF | 9 APRIL 2023

On Saturday, Mazlum Abdi, the Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), revealed the details surrounding the targeting of his convoy on Friday by a UAV belonging to the Turkish occupation near Sulaymaniyah airport in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Abdi explained that the attack occurred on the way back from meetings with allies against the terrorist organization of ISIS and the convoy was carrying his American partners and the CTG force.

Abdi stated in a video statement that the attack did not result in any harm or damage. However, he emphasized that the primary goal of the attack was to hinder the joint war they are conducting with their local partners, the Kurdish forces in Iraqi Kurdistan, the State of Iraq, and their international partners.

Abdi added that the Turkish state is not satisfied with the joint war against ISIS, and as a result, it is trying to obstruct and prevent the continuation of the war by all available means.

Abdi further explained that the attack was also motivated by the Turkish occupation state's dissatisfaction with the recently strengthened brotherly relations between North-East Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan. The Turkish state is attempting to eliminate and end these joint relations, which Abdi believes is the reason their convoy was targeted in Sulaymaniyah.

Abdi also believes that the attack is closely related to the upcoming Turkish elections, stating, "Without a doubt, Erdogan and his group will resort to all options available to them to achieve a cheap victory, even if it means shedding the blood of the Kurds. He will try to exploit this situation to influence Turkish public opinion and win the elections."

Abdi asserted that the Turkish occupation state and Erdogan did not achieve their goals with the attack, as it was condemned by many Kurdish and Iraqi forces and political parties, who showed their support for the joint war against ISIS.

Abdi expressed his gratitude for the support and condemnation of the attack from Kurdish and Iraqi forces, stating, "We deeply appreciate the solidarity and opposition of the Kurdish forces, and we extend our thanks to the State of Iraq and our international allies in the fight against ISIS."

The commander-in-chief emphasized that the attack failed to achieve its objectives and highlighted that this was not the first time they were targeted by the Turkish occupation state, and it may not be the last.

In his concluding remarks, Mazlum Abdi stated, "To our people, friends, and supporters, we vow that our resistance will only intensify in the future to safeguard the gains of the North-East Syrian revolution. These types of attacks will not weaken our determination to elevate our level of resistance. Our efforts to unify the ranks of the Kurdish forces will continue to intensify, and our actions will develop even further."

Abdi also expressed his gratitude to all the forces and parties that showed their support, while also saluting the Kurdish people and all the peoples of NE Syria.



## Explosion in Hawraman results in casualties

ANF | 11 APRIL 2023

An explosion occurred on Tuesday in the town of Tewêle in Hawraman city, located in the border area between East Kurdistan (Iran) and South Kurdistan (Iraq).

According to Halabja Police Department Spokesperson, Muqedem Barzan Osman, the explosion claimed the life of a person and left two others injured.

The victim is reported to be a 31-year-old citizen from Halabja. Those injured have been taken to Halabja Hospital.

Muqedem Barzan Osman stated that an investigation has been launched into the incident.



## Citizens forced to pay tax at checkpoints on Shehba-Aleppo road

ANF | SHEHBA | 12 APRIL 2023

Apart from its embargo on the Shehba Canton in northern Syria, the Damascus government is forcing the residents of the canton to pay taxes the checkpoints along the Shehba-Aleppo road in return for allowing the passage of basic needs.

There are 6 checkpoints along the Shehba-Aleppo road, including the 4th Brigade, State Security, Air Intelligence and Military Security (Police-Customs) affiliated with the Damascus government.

Citizens who are granted a certificate to pass through the checkpoints in Shehba go to Aleppo to meet their basic needs, reported the Hawar News Agency (ANHA).

According to the report, citizens are forced to pay taxes to go shopping. Even private bags are taxed and at least 20 Syrian liras are requested.

A citizen named M.H. who lives in the Shehba Canton said that he went to Aleppo to buy a battery for his car and paid 20 Syrian liras to the 4th Brigade to pass through the checkpoint.

Speaking to ANHA, M.H. said that the Damascus government imposed taxes on everything, including basic goods.

M.H. stated that officials at the checkpoint told him “Doesn't matter if you are Arab or Kurdish, if you don't give us money, take back the goods you have bought.”



## 21,000 people settled in occupied Girê Spî in one year

ANF | 13 APRIL 2023

While the Kurdish population in particular is being systematically expelled from the areas occupied by Turkey in northern Syria, the Turkish state is pursuing an intensive settlement policy.

One of these occupied areas is the region of Girê Spî (Tal Abyad). The formerly multicultural, self-governing region was occupied by Turkey in 2019 and is now controlled by the Turkish intelligence service and jihadist mercenaries. According to the Girê Spî Cantol Council, more than 100,000 people had to flee the region after the Turkish invasion.

People loyal to the Turkish regime are now being resettled in their place. According to the ANHA news agency, Turkey has resettled 21,000 people in Girê Spî since April 2022; 9,181 of them in the last three months. It is said that those brought to the region are mercenaries and their families. Back in April 2022, it was reported that 12,757 people had been transferred to Girê Spî from Aleppo, Idlib, Homs and Eastern Ghouta. According to the report, Turkey has built houses on the west side of Girê Spî and in Ain Arus with funding from associations in Qatar, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Turkish state has repeatedly concluded agreements with Russia and the Syrian regime to take over jihadists and their relatives and settle them in the areas it has occupied. For the takeover of jihadists from Eastern Ghouta, for example, Turkey received the green light for the invasion of Afrin.



## TEV-DEM Co-Chair: Turkish attack in Sulaymaniyah is multifaceted

MUSTAFA ÇOBAN | HESEKE | 14 APRIL 2023

The Turkish government closed its airspace to flights to and from Sulaymaniyah Airport on April 3 and attacked the airport with armed drones on April 7. The Turkish state, which freely carries out attacks anywhere in Bashur (South Kurdistan), has bombed several locations in Sulaymaniyah, including civilian settlements and public utilities.

The Democratic Society Movement (TEV-DEM) Co-Chair Ehmed spoke to ANF about the attack on Sulaymaniyah Airport and its goals.

Ehmed pointed out that it was not a coincidence that this attack took place amid the negotiations between Qamishlo and Sulaymaniyah over Kurdish National Unity. She said: “There have been discussions and efforts concerning Kurdish National Unity for a while. The visit of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Leader Bafî Talabani to Rojava paved the way for talks. There are reciprocal visits between Sulaymaniyah, Qamishlo and Amed (Diyarbakır). In particular, the Sulaymaniyah region is an important place for Kurdish national unity activities. Targeting Sulaymaniyah Airport is tantamount to targeting the national unity of the Kurdish people. They wanted to overshadow the efforts of national unity. It is certainly not a coincidence that this attack was carried out amid the talks between Kurdish forces.”

Ehmed listed the goals of the Turkish fascist government and its collaborators as follows: “The target is Kurdish national unity, which will be a source of hope and inspiration for the Middle East and all humanity, our people's hopes and expectations for national unity and peace and stability in both regions. Moreover, they aimed to cripple the 14 May elections to be held in Bakûr (North Kurdistan) and Turkey, which will significantly affect the Kurds, and the Kurds' struggle against ISIS, which poses serious danger to the whole world. (The targeted group was stated to be a team involved in the fight against ISIS.)”

Ehmed also warned the KDP, which seeks to legitimize the Sulaymaniyah attack that posed a serious danger to the Kurds and all the people living in the region. She concluded: “We disagree with the KDP's

statements that seek to legitimize the attack carried out by the Turkish state. We are warning the KDP once again about this. Our people in South Kurdistan, especially those in Sulaymaniyah, are politically minded. They are aware of what this attack means and why it took place.”

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## HSM publishes annual balance sheet of the war in Medya Defense Zones

ANF | BEHDINAN | 14 APRIL 2023

In the past twelve months, the war in the guerrilla-held Medya Defence Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) has been raging at its highest intensity. The Turkish army repeatedly tried to bring the guerrilla-protected areas under its occupation and control, suffering heavy losses. The annual balance sheet of the central headquarters of the People's Defence Forces (HSM) shows the serious extent of the clashes. According to this, 2,833 Turkish soldiers were killed and 259 guerrilla fighters fell. Since the Turkish army is unsuccessful with conventional means against the guerrillas, who defend the region in mobile units and with war tunnel systems, it repeatedly resorts to prohibited means of combat, especially chemical weapons. The HSM speaks of 3,730 attacks with chemical and other unconventional weapons. Since the earthquake on 6 February, the guerrilla forces have been in a ceasefire, which was extended for the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections on 14 May. Nevertheless, the Turkish attacks do not cease.

The HSM's annual balance sheet of the war in Medya Defense Zones reads as follows:

"From 2015, when the fascist AKP/MHP regime realised that it was politically defeated and could no longer hold on to power, it opted for a policy of war. On this basis, especially the Kurdish people, the Kurdistan Freedom Movement and all population groups in Turkey that are not in favour of fascism became the target of the AKP/MHP regime. The regime launched relentless attacks. This war started with the absolute isolation and psychological torture against Rêber Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] in İmralı and was extended step by step to all parts of society. However, no matter how much the fascist regime attacked, it could not break the resistance attitude of Rêber Apo, the Kurdish people, his companions and his freedom movement and could not achieve its goal.

The fascist AKP/MHP regime therefore gathered its forces and launched a new attack to occupy the Medya Defence Zones with the support of the international hegemonic powers and local Kurdish collaborators. This attack began on 24 April 2021 and was directed against Avaşîn, Zap and Metîna. The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla put up historic resistance and prevented the AKP/MHP regime from implementing its plans. By occupying the Medya Defence Zones, the fascist regime planned to decisively weaken the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, complete the borders of Misak-ı Milli [the Ottoman National Pact] by occupying new areas, especially Southern Kurdistan, Shengal and Western Kurdistan (Rojava), and to consolidate its power again through such a military victory in the early elections in Turkey.

However, it did not succeed in 2021. The AKP/MHP special war regime then tried to realise its plan in 2022 on the basis of the same concept by using chemical weapons and unconventional bombs against the

Kurdish freedom guerrillas. The fascist regime has received open and covert support from Gladio and collaborating, traitorous local elements in order to keep quiet about its war crimes. On this basis, the regime launched another invasion operation against Zap, Avaşîn and Metîna on 14 April 2022. The invasion began with extensive and intensive air strikes and continued on 17 April 2022 with an advance on the ground and an attempt to airdrop troops. This invasion operation was expected to yield results within a few weeks and was essentially based on the concept of ruthless use of chemical weapons, banned bombs, advanced war technology and heavy bombardment. However, in 2022, the freedom guerrillas put up an epic resistance through their Apoist sacrifice in Zap, Avaşîn and Metîna and stopped and thwarted the invasion by maintaining their positions and existence against all inhumane, war criminal attacks. As a result, the Turkish army had to withdraw from some areas at the end of 2022.

### **"Everone is fed up with this fascist regime"**

This period of war and inhuman attacks was initiated by the decision of Tayyip Erdoğan and Devlet Bahçeli to keep their fascist regime in power for another term. All the resources of the peoples of Turkey and the state have been mobilised for this war. The fascist regime tried to gain political advantages at the cost of the people's blood by equating the continuation of its own power with the continuation of the whole of Turkey and forcing everyone to support this war. However, day by day, the dirty war policy of the fascist regime became more and more obvious, the crimes against humanity committed by it were documented and it was revealed that it had brought Turkey to misfortune and to the brink of collapse. With Turkey's entry into the electoral process, it has now become completely clear that the leaders of this special war, such as Tayyip Erdoğan, Devlet Bahçeli, Hulusi Akar and Süleyman Soylu, are waging this war for the sake of political profits and are trying to secure their power and interests by shedding the blood of guerrilla fighters and soldiers, but that if they do not succeed, they will try to save themselves alone. Everyone is fed up with this fascist regime that only brings tears to the peoples of Turkey. Support for the regime has decreased significantly.

### **"Balance sheet of the non-stop war"**

Undoubtedly, it was not easy to stop the invasion attacks and resist the countless attacks, including the chemical weapons and the banned bombs, and achieve such a historic result. The freedom guerrillas of Kurdistan, who have gained a self-sacrificing spirit and indomitable will through enlightenment in the consciousness of Apoist philosophy, heroically resisted the attacks of 2021 and 2022. With the onset of the winter season of 2022, the attacks of the Turkish army partially subsided, and the army had to withdraw from some places, but until today the attacks east and west of the Zap continue. During the one-year war, 259 of our comrades were martyred in the Medya Defence Zones.

2,833 members of the invading forces were killed and 387 were wounded. While the Medya Defence Zones were shelled tens of thousands of times by tanks, howitzers, mortars and other heavy weapons, 4,233 attacks were carried out by fighter jets and 5,628 by attack helicopters. Our resistance positions were attacked 3,730 times with unconventional bombs and chemical weapons. The fascist AKP/MHP regime committed serious crimes against humanity. The one-year balance sheet of the war, which started on 14 April 2022 and continued uninterrupted until 14 April 2023 despite the cessation of actions declared by our movement two months ago, is as follows:

Attacks by the Turkish army with chemical weapons and unconventional bombs: 3,730

Attacks by combat aircraft: 4,233; Attacks by combat helicopters: 5,628; Invaders killed: 2,833; Invaders injured: 387

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## YPG: Our comrade Baran Nisêbin fell a martyr following Turkish drone attack

ANF | QAMISHLO | 15 APRIL 2023

The People's Defense Units (YPG) Press Center issued a statement regarding the attack carried out by the Turkish state with an armed drone (UAV) targeting a vehicle in Qamishlo. The statement said that Mihemed Sari (Baran Nisêbin) was in the targeted vehicle and fell a martyr as a result of the attack.

The statement said: “On 14 April, an armed drone belonging to the invading Turkish state targeted a vehicle near the Nusaybin (Nisêbin) gate on the Hizam road in Qamishlo. As a result of the attack, our comrade Baran Nisêbin fell as a martyr.”

The statement added: “Our comrade Baran was born to a patriotic family in the Nusaybin district of Mardin. Known for its resistance in our freedom struggle, the town of Nusaybin has always been an area of resistance. Our people in Nusaybin have a culture of resistance. At the beginning of the Rojava Revolution and in the most difficult and arduous times we were facing, our patriotic people from four parts of Kurdistan, including Nusaybin, came to Rojava with national spirit. Our comrade Baran is one of the brave men who answered the call for mobilization in the Kobanê resistance.”

The statement continued: “Comrade Baran took an active part in the war against ISIS from Kobanê to Manbij, from Raqqa to Deir ez-Zor. He has done an incredible job in liberating our cities under ISIS occupation. Comrade Baran was a member of the Asayiş (Internal Security), SDF and YPG.

We would like to express our condolences to the beloved family of our martyr, to our people of Mardin and to all our patriotic people.”

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## Two citizens from Sheladizê killed in Turkish state bombing

ANF | 15 APRIL 2023

On 3 April, Arif Umer (40) from the village of Şabye in Şelazdizê and Ahmet Hasan (35) from the village of Site went to Dawidkê Mountain to collect endemic beets that grow in spring. Since then, there has been no news from the citizens.

On Friday, the bodies of the 2 citizens were found near the village of Erdêl in Sheladize.

In a statement to Rojnews, the Community Peacemaker Teams reported that both citizens were killed in an airstrike carried out by the Turkish state.

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## Shengal Democratic Autonomous Assembly holds its 5th congress

ANF | SHENGAL | 16 APRIL 2023

The 5th Congress of the Shengal Democratic Autonomous Assembly started in Sinun with the slogan 'We will build Shengal, we will make the autonomy permanent'. The congress continues with the reading of the messages sent by institutions and individuals. KNK, TEV-DEM, TAJÊ, the German delegation and the Yazidis living in Afrin and institutions and individuals in Southern Kurdistan sent their messages to the congress.

Speaking on behalf of the Yazidis living in Europe, Çiçek Yıldız said: "We are standing by those who defend these lands. We closely follow the resistance in these lands. The invading Turkish state is carrying out attacks against our lands. Our message to our enemies is that they should withdraw from our land. We will elect and train our own commanders and politicians from among ourselves. We will not let others rule us."

### 'We have to resist'

Speaking on behalf of the KNK, Sebriye Sevgat said: "Shengal is the honor of Kurdistan. The resistance of Shengal is the resistance of all of us. We draw our strength from the resistance of the Yazidi women. We have survived the ISIS genocide, but we are faced with other massacres. We must resist."

The family of Mam Beşir, one of the leading figures of the Yazidi people, was among the attendees of the congress. Mam Beşir's wife Dayê Sebriye and sister Xanê greeted the congress and said: "We will be the voice of Mam Beşir and Mam Zeki. We will be the voice of all martyrs in Kurdistan. We will defend Shengal. Defending Shengal is defending Leader Abdullah Öcalan and Kurdistan."

### The Yazidi community is walking towards freedom

TAJÊ (the women's organization) said: "Our people paid a great price so that they could govern themselves with their own will, language and culture. As a result of the price paid and the resistance put forward, our people are walking towards freedom with their own culture, will and dignity."

After the messages from institutions and individuals were read, the message of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan to the Yazidi people and his evaluations were also read.

## **Autonomy government is a system to defend the Yazidi community**

Speakers underlined that the Autonomous Administration is not only a social and political contract, but also a defense system for the Yazidis and all its components in Shengal. "In today's world, there are autonomous administration systems in many parts of the world. Self-government has become the key to self-defense and governance, especially for cultural and minority groups. Democracy and local governments are developing day by day in our region and in the world."

## **Iraq must recognize the Autonomous Administration**

Speakers said that "Iraq is governed by the federal system. The Constitution includes several laws on the development of local governments. The Shengal Autonomous Administration is the best example of self-government at the constitutional level. The Shengal Democratic Autonomy is the basis for the construction of a democratic Iraq and, on this basis, the basis of Iraqi democratic unity. The Shengal Democratic Autonomous Administration needs to be recognized, understood and accepted by Iraq and all international powers."

## **Social Contract**

The Social Contract includes some of the following points:

- The Democratic Autonomous Administration is based on the democratic, ecological and women's free paradigm.
- The Shengal Democratic Autonomy derives its legitimacy and power from the participation of equal and free peoples and faith groups, and this administration is based on the will of the peoples.
- In the Shengal Democratic Autonomous Administration, all cultures, religions, beliefs and languages are equal in all areas of life. All societies build and manage their lives in their own mother tongue.
- The Shengal Democratic Autonomous Administration considers itself a part of the Iraqi lands and administration with its democracy in place and the equal and free participation of the peoples.
- The Shengal Democratic Autonomous Administration continues to work for the development of a free and equal life based on the idea of a Democratic Nation.
- The Shengal Democratic Autonomous Administration considers the co-chairmanship system a fundamental criterion in all political and social life.
- Young people are the future of society. They build their own organization in every area of life and take their place everywhere.
- Self-defense is a legitimate and natural right for all peoples, cultures, religions and beliefs. All individuals and groups are responsible and responsible for the defense of Shengal.

## Congress decisions

The congress also took some important decisions, among which are the following:

- Martyr Dijwar Feqîr (Merwan Bedel) was declared the permanent and spiritual co-chair of the Shengal Democratic Autonomous Assembly.
- Martyr Hesên Saît, Martyr İsa, Martyr Azad, Martyr Pir Ceko, Martyr Şerzat, Martyr Agir, Martyr Enwer, Martyr Zagros, Martyr Muhsin, Martyr İbrahim Derwêş, Martyr Faraşin, Martyr Menal, Martyr Şerwan were declared martyrs of the resistance.
- The martyrs of the Sikêniyê Hospital were declared martyrs of honor, labor and patriotism.
- Efforts will continue at the highest level to have the massacre carried out on 3 August 2014 by ISIS against the Yazidi people recognised as genocide in Iraq and internationally.
- A dialogue will be established with all parties about the recognition of Shengal as an autonomous region.
- The Democratic Autonomy project, prepared by the Shengal Autonomous Assembly, will be considered as a solution and the Democratic Autonomy project will be taken as a basis in all dialogues.
- The 9 October Agreement signed by the KDP, Kazimi Government and the Turkish state against the will of the Yazidi people will be rejected in all aspects and resistance will be developed against it.
- Every means of resistance will be implemented for the freedom of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan
- Mam Zeki and Mam Beşir were proclaimed symbols of unity and solidarity among the Yazidis.



## HRE announces the death of two fighters

ANF | 16 APRIL 2023

The Afrin Liberation Forces (HRE) released a statement announcing the death of two of their fighters. Accordingly, Cilo Baliya and Xabur Efrin lost their lives while on duty in the Afrin region on April 15.

Offering condolences to the families of the two fallen fighters, HRE stated the following:

"During the popular uprisings against the Baath regime across Syria in 2011, the Kurdish people in Rojava (West Kurdistan) liberated their cities one by one under the lead of the Revolutionary Youth Movement. There was almost no place left not affected by the revolutionary process. Our comrade Cilo from the resistance area was one of those to join the ranks of the YPG (People's Defense Units) in the Afrin region in

2012. He took part in the liberation campaigns in Shehba and surrounding regions as the YPG fought mercenary groups such as al-Nusra and ISIS. Our comrade Cilo also participated in the 58-day-long resistance against the invaders in Afrin on the frontlines. Married and father of three children, he fought to protect the region and achieve its security. After the invasion of Afrin, he trained himself at command level to return to the land where he was born and raised. He witnessed at first hand the suffering of the Afrin people who were forcibly displaced to Shehba and other regions. He acted with responsibility towards his land, people and companions. He undertook his duties and responsibilities with great awareness and scrupulousness.

Comrade Xabur Efrin, like any patriot committed to his land, was influenced by free thought and joined our ranks to bring the enemy to account for the invasion of Afrin. With his iron will, he never agreed to surrender and remained persistent in his struggle to return to Afrin. His primary goal was to turn back to Afrin together with his people. He undertook great responsibilities. We will make his dreams come true."

— ★ —

## Turkey bombs villages of Afrin and Shehba

ANF | 16 APRIL 2023

The Turkish state bombed the rural areas around the villages of Aqîbê and Şoxanekê in Sherawa, in Afrin Canton, the villages of Benê, Miyase, Zirneît, Soxanek and Aqîbê. The Turkish state also bombarded Minix Airport and the villages of Bêlûniyê and Eyn Deqnê in the Shehba region.

Approximately 545 artillery attacks were carried out in the region, and property belonging to the people suffered material damage as a result of the bombardment.

On the other hand, a center of government forces in Damascus was also targeted by artillery.

Reconnaissance planes were flying around the area.

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## ISIS killed 41 people in Syria on Sunday

ANF | 17 APRIL 2023

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) said that ISIS gangs killed 36 people in the desert east of Hama while picking truffles. According to the Observatory, 17 of those killed were pro-Damascus militias. According to the government-affiliated Sana agency, 26 people were killed.

The Observatory stated that armed people thought to be affiliated with ISIS gangs killed 5 shepherds in the Deir ez-Zor region. The news agency Sana wrote that ISIS gangs first killed 5 people and then opened fire on animals and killed 250 sheep.

Decomposed bodies of two civilians were found in the same province. The Observatory reported that a few days ago they were killed by ISIS mercenaries also while picking truffles.

Since the beginning of February, the number of people killed while picking mushrooms has exceeded 250. Most of them were civilians.

The truffles grown in the Syrian desert are considered among the best in the world and are usually picked between February and April and sold at high prices. In the country, where the average monthly wage is \$18, truffle harvesting is seen as a livelihood. A kilo of truffles sells for between \$5 and \$25, depending on size and quality.



## Helicopter raid by the US military targets ISIS in northern Syria

ANF | 17 APRIL 2023

The United States military launched a helicopter raid in northern Syria on Monday, resulting in the "probable death" of a senior leader and operational planner of ISIS, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

The statement said the leader was responsible for planning terror attacks in the Middle East and Europe. The raid also killed two other "armed individuals."

"Though degraded, ISIS remains able to conduct operations within the region with a desire to strike beyond the Middle East," said General Michael Erik Kurilla, CENTCOM Commander. "We will continue the relentless campaign against ISIS."

"This operation reaffirms CENTCOM's steadfast commitment to the region and the enduring defeat of ISIS," said Joe Buccino, a CENTCOM spokesperson. "We will provide additional details soon."

CENTCOM said extensive planning went into the operation and that no civilians or U.S. troops were hurt in the operation.

The military also said no helicopters used in the operation were damaged.

The operation was launched from a base near Kobani and targeted a military site belonging to a Turkish-backed opposition group, Suqour al-Shamal, in the village of Suwayda, according to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The Syrian Democratic Forces are partners with the U.S. in the fight against ISIS.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based human rights organization, the raid resulted in the arrest of a senior IS leader and killed three people. The US military did not say if any arrests had been made.

Last weekend, CENTCOM carried out another helicopter raid in Syria that resulted in the capture of Hodayfah al Yemeni – an "ISIS attack facilitator" – and two of his associates.

"ISIS remains a threat to the region and beyond – the group retains the capability to conduct operations in Iraq and Syria with a desire to strike beyond the Middle East, and its vile ideology remains a threat," Buccino said Saturday about the raid on April 8.

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## PUK responds to Barzani: What exactly are you proud of?

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 18 APRIL 2023

The Prime Minister of Kurdistan Region, Masrour Barzani, said at a fast-breaking meal in Hewler (Erbil) on April 16 that "We can never be partners in treason, corruption, terrorism, intimidation, plunder and using people for their own interests."

The Hewler Office of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) responded to Mesrour Barzani.

The PUK statement on Tuesday said: "Those who sold their lands are the ones who have allowed Turkey to establish more than a hundred military bases between Hewlêr and Duhok, turned a blind eye to the martyrdom of its citizens, and paved the way for the plunder of the nature and forests of Kurdistan. The remarks and the attitude of the 9th President of the Cabinet concerning politics, economy, diplomacy and cooperation are dragging the Kurdistan Region into a dark tunnel.

What is happening in the Kurdistan Region is a violation of all the criteria of statehood. The reason is terrorism and the policies being pursued. The Kurdistan regional government has always gone down on the knees of Baghdad. So, what exactly are you proud of now? What have you done other than stir up troubles in the Kurdistan Region and destroy political privileges? You have lost all the support at international level. You have eliminated unity at home, and you are trying to destroy all relations.

These people have also jeopardized the sources of income to pay the salaries of all teachers, peshmerga and police officers."

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## AANES releases declaration for a solution in Syria

ANF | RAQQA | 18 APRIL 2023

At a time when quadripartite meetings are held under Russian auspices, and the Damascus government continues its talks with the governments of Arab countries, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) has revealed its program for a solution to the Syrian crisis.

The declaration, which includes a number of proposals and ways to solve issues in the country and to build a democratic Syria, was announced to the public at a press conference in front of the Autonomous Administration Executive Council in Raqqa.

AANES Co-President Hamid El Mihbaş made a statement to the press, saying the following:

"In 2011, a revolutionary popular movement started in Syria as a result of exclusion and marginalization, which led to a political crisis that has not been resolved yet after 12 years. Based on our responsibility towards the Syrian people in all its diversity and pursuant to the principles and political vision of the Syrian Democratic Council that aim at finding a political solution to the Syrian crisis, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), which consists of democratic institutions, administrations, political parties, forces and organizations, releases this declaration to achieve a peaceful and democratic solution that could put an end to the suffering of millions of Syrians.

The Syrian crisis has had political, economic, and social repercussions. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians lost their lives. Millions from Afrin, Serêkaniyê, Idlib, Azaz, al-Bab, Jarablus, Girê Spî and other Syrian areas were forced to leave their homes and become either internally displaced or refugees. A large number of Syrians have been subjected to inhumane practices in some refugee-hosting countries. The devastating earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria on February 6, 2023 exacerbated the suffering of the Syrian IDPs and refugees.

The Turkish government, led by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), have discriminated against the Syrian refugees in the provision of humanitarian aid. Across Syria, people are experiencing difficult living conditions and are facing serious problems, such as poverty, unemployment, racism, insecurity and instability, which were further exacerbated by the earthquake. The diverse communities of the Syrian people must not continue to suffer from the catastrophic humanitarian situation. They are awaiting an urgent peaceful solution that guarantees security, stability, and a democratic future that ensures a free and decent life in their country.

Accordingly, all responsible political forces must work together and take the required steps in order to find a common solution based on the foundations of dialogue, cooperation and consensus.

The AANES is aware of its responsibility towards all Syrians. Therefore, it will strive to take the necessary steps to resolve the crisis and establish peace and stability, taking into consideration that the international and regional platforms and initiatives, such as Geneva, Astana, the Constitutional Committee and others, have not yielded any significant results in the context of providing a solution to the Syrian crisis. This may be due to the following main reasons:

1. Absence of correct analysis and diagnosis of the Syrian crisis;
2. Absence of a program for a peaceful and democratic solution;
3. Exclusion of some Syrian forces from the dialogue process, and insistence on external solutions.

In addition, the Syrian government failed to play a positive and effective role that could lead to a political solution to the Syrian crisis. It should have, from the outset, searched for a peaceful settlement to the crisis

and called on all parties to find a way out, but it remained outside this equation, which delayed the solution and prolonged the crisis, leading to further suffering of the Syrians.

The solution to the Syrian crisis must be sought inside the country, and the Syrian government must show a responsible stance and take urgent measures that could contribute to the success of finding an internal solution.

It is crucial that all political forces, including political parties and women's and youth organizations, regardless of whether they are large or small, be given a voice in drawing the future of Syria's administration. This is of the utmost importance to achieve peace and stability.

Syria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Any viable solution must involve all groups in determining their future and resolving Syria's crisis.

In order to achieve this, the following points must be clarified:

1. The AANES affirms the unity of the Syrian lands and believes that the problems that Syria is experiencing can only be solved within the framework of Syria's unity. In this context and in order to achieve a solution, the AANES affirms its readiness to meet and hold dialogue with the Syrian government and all Syrian parties for consultations and discussions to provide initiatives to find a solution to the Syrian crisis.
2. The Syrian crisis resulted from the lack of democratic and social policies and the marginalization of Syria's diverse ethnic and religious communities. Each ethnic and religious group has its own characteristics and the right to citizenship and equality. There are national commonalities among all Syrians, and different cultures that must be recognized and respected to enrich Syria's national fabric. Therefore, any democratic solution should recognize the legitimate rights of all religious and ethnic communities, such as the Arabs, Kurds, Syriac-Assyrians, and others. The collective rights of Syria's communities must be protected, and democratic values and mechanisms must be developed in order to build an administrative political system based on democracy, pluralism, and decentralization, that ensures equal rights for all Syrians.
3. The democratic political system in North and East Syria has ensured equal rights for all people. People can live freely in an atmosphere of security and stability. They can solve their problems through autonomous administrations, which allow people to run their own affairs in order to overcome any obstacles and challenges that may arise.

It has been proven beyond any doubt that social democratic harmony and stability have been achieved through the participation of all political, cultural and social groups in the administrations.

We believe that the social, democratic and environmental model of governance in North and East Syria, which is based on gender equality and environmental sustainability, is capable of forming a foundation and a building block for reaching a solution to the Syrian crisis. It can provide successful solutions to all issues that Syrian society suffers from.

4. The AANES stresses that economic wealth and resources must be distributed fairly among all Syrian regions. The resources in North and East Syria, such as oil, gas, and agriculture, like other resources in other

regions of Syria, belong to all Syrians. The AANES stresses the need to reach an agreement with the Syrian government to share resources through dialogue and negotiation.

In order to address the basic needs of the population and to deliver aid to all areas, the Al-Yarubiyah (Til Koçer) border crossing, as well as other crossings, must be reopened. The main responsibility in this regard lies with the Syrian government. A reasonable solution could be found that suits all parties and serves the interests of the Syrians.

5. To reduce and limit the problems and risks facing the Syrian people, from all communities, who have been displaced from their regions or sought refuge in other countries, the AANES expresses its willingness to embrace and receive them within its available resources, as it has received other Syrians since the beginning of its establishment. Accordingly, it will take the necessary measures in this regard.

6. The AANES affirms that its struggle and efforts in the fight against terrorism will be ongoing to deter the terrorism of Daesh (ISIS) and other terrorist groups, and to eliminate their threats to Syria, the region and the entire world. The AANES has lost thousands of its men and women in the fight against terrorism, and paid huge sacrifice to rid the world from terrorism on behalf of the whole world.

7. The Turkish government has deepened the Syrian crisis, dismantled the country's territory and its unity, and supported terrorist groups, such as ISIS and others. The Turkish government's intervention in Syria aims to divert attention from its internal crises and to export its problems to its neighbors through its aggression and the use of terrorist and mercenary groups in order to achieve its objectives. The aggressive practices of the Turkish state have led to human tragedies and human rights violations that cannot be tolerated, which has led to changing the demographic composition of our region.

The causes of all the problems on the Syrian-Turkish border can be attributed to the aggressive policies of the AKP and MHP coalition government, which aims to influence Syria's internal politics and reshape the political situation according to its interests. The pretexts and arguments that the AKP and MHP put forward to justify their hostility to the AANES are absolutely far from truth. The attempt to assassinate the Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Sulaymaniyah is the clearest evidence of this. The AANES does not have enmity towards the people of Turkey. The Turkish state must end its occupation of the Syrian lands. Our people want to live in peace with Turkey and all the neighboring countries, but we affirm that we will exercise our right to legitimate defense, in the event of any Turkish aggression on our people and land.

8. To develop a democratic and peaceful solution in Syria, we would like to address the Arab countries, the United Nations, and all active international powers in the Syrian issue, and ask them to play a positive and constructive role in finding a common solution with the Syrian government, the AANES, and the national democratic forces.

9. In order to resolve the crisis within the framework of the unity and integrity of Syria, and to develop and implement a political solution that protects and safeguards the interests of the Syrian people, the AANES has a clear approach to a reasonable solution that it proposes to all parties to be a basis for dialogue and future agreement. The AANES proposes this initiative as a national basis and invites all parties to participate and contribute to it, by accelerating efforts and endeavors aimed at ending the conflict in a manner that does not contradict Security Council Resolution (2254) and all relevant UN resolutions. The

AANES is also ready to discuss all points of view and solution projects and to make the necessary arrangements to hold talks to achieve a national solution.

In order to solve the Syrian crisis, the AANES has assumed its historical and humanitarian responsibility, fully aware that hundreds of thousands of Syrians have lost their lives and millions are living in a dire humanitarian situation. Based on this responsibility, the AANES calls on the Syrian government and all national democratic forces to respond to this initiative, and to work towards finding a common solution that ends the crisis and the suffering of the Syrians to build our homeland again."

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## Kurdish patriot killed in armed attack in Duhok

ANF | 18 APRIL 2023

A deadly attack was carried out in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) on a Kurd who had fled Turkey for political reasons. Huseyin Türeli was shot dead in Duhok on Monday evening. According to RojNews, the attack took place at 9 pm local time at Türeli's workplace in a shopping centre. According to the report, nine shots were fired at Türeli, who was hit by seven bullets and died on the way to hospital.

Hüseyin Türeli had been targeted by another attack in May last year. According to RojNews, he stated at the time that the attack had been carried out by the Turkish secret service (MIT). Three days before the failed attack, on 17 May 2022, a restaurant owner, Mehmet Zeki Çelebi, was shot dead in the open street in Sulaymaniyah. The MIT is also suspected to be behind this assassination.

The HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) representation office in KRI held a press conference in Hewler (Erbil) and stated that MIT was behind the deadly attack on Türeli.

"Increasingly ongoing attacks in South Kurdistan since 2021 have claimed the lives of Yasin Bulut, Zeki Çelebi, Nagihan Akarsel and Mamoste Şemal. These attacks by MIT are a result of the pressure and threats against politicians who moved to South Kurdistan from North Kurdistan. The killer of Hüseyin Türeli is an AKP-MHP member. We condemn this savage attack and call on the officials in Duhok to find the perpetrator as soon as possible and not to let him get away with it."

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# Femicide

## PJAK co-chair: “Jin, Jiyan, Azadî” revolution in Iran and Rojhilat continues

ANF | GÖTEBORG | 3 APRIL 2023

Siyamend Muini, co-chair of PJAK (Kurdistan Free Life Party), spoke at an event in Goteborg, Switzerland marking the birthday of Kurdish people’s leader Abdullah Öcalan on April 4.

Muini stated that April 4 represented “a historic junction in terms of politics, society and philosophy”.

Muini pointed to the “Jin, Jiyan, Azadî” (Woman, Life, Freedom) uprising in Iran and East Kurdistan, defining it as “a social renaissance of mindset”.

Muini warned against the risk of seizure of revolution unless “leftist and libertarian circles are not careful and take no precaution.

“This revolution should be continued unbroken,” said Muini, adding, “There is a possibility that the people of Iran will take to the streets in an even stronger manner in the coming months. This revolution should continue until the invading Republic of Iran is pulled down.

The Iranian state has no political, economic, social and military power left, said Muini, according to whom there is no doubt left that the Republic of Iran will fall.

Highlighting the importance of the unity of political parties in East Kurdistan, Muini stated; “Kurds should be able to contribute to the future of Iran. Work should be carried out for a Kurdistan front, and a unity and coalition of peoples should be built.”

The co-chair of PJAK stressed that they will not allow the Jin, Jiyan, Azadî” uprising to be derailed.

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## Ten years ago, the YPJ were founded

ANF | 4 APRIL 2023

Today marks the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the YPJ (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin - Women's Defense Units).

As one of the commanders, Nesrin Abdullah, underlined, "the YPJ were not suddenly founded by resolution from above, and they did not just come into existence. They were founded on the basis of consciousness, on a scientific basis. The history of women worldwide and Kurdish women has been researched and interpreted. The decision to build up their own women's forces is based on scientific findings. In order to enable a strong foundation, preparations for the necessary substructure have been made."

Abdullah said that "our first finding in the start-up phase was the existing need for specific women's units for self-defense. Second, we realized that such an organization would not be possible without ideology. An ideological participation was necessary, the pure accession was not enough. If women did not trust themselves and their own strength and had no consciousness, there would have been no difference. Women would have carried weapons and men as well. That's why the women's liberation ideology was essential to us.

There has also been a debate on the standard of acceptance and rejection of women and the question of their own organization. In addition to the positive factors such as the trust that was placed in us and the growing determination and perseverance, there were also many difficulties."

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## 5 Iranian schoolgirls poisoned in Urmia

ANF | URMUİA | 4 APRIL 2023

As mass anti-government protests have been going on since the murder of a young Kurdish woman named Mahsa Amini by the morality police in Tehran in September 2022, poisoning attacks against girls' schools and dormitories have increased in recent months.

Poisoning attacks are considered as part of a government plan to suppress the popular protests.

Five schoolgirls were poisoned at the Bahman Girls' School in Al Naqda in the Urmia province in East Kurdistan. The students were taken to a hospital.

According to local sources, students experienced nausea, headache and stomachache after being exposed to a cloud of smoke caused by burnt rubber.

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## Men killed at least 23 women in March / Turkey

ANF | 6 APRIL 2023

According to the news compiled by bianet from local and national newspapers, news websites and news agencies, men killed at least 23 women and four children in March.

In March, the deaths of at least 20 women and three children were considered as "suspicious."

Men inflicted violence on at least 66 women, abused 14 boys and girls, and harassed at least two women. There have been two rape cases that were reflected in the press in March 2023. Men forced 102 women into prostitution.

One woman in Denizli used her right to self-defense.

## **Femicide**

In March, men killed at least 23 women. This figure was 25 in the same month last year. Men also killed four men who were together with the women whom they killed.

Men killed at least four women despite protection orders. One woman killed was a Russian citizen, while one was from Uzbekistan.

## **Child murder**

Men killed at least four children in March. This figure was four in the same month last year. Three children were killed by their fathers, and one child by a relative.



# Saturday Mothers detained in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 8 APRIL 2023

The Saturday Mothers have been holding a sit-in protest every Saturday in Istanbul's Galatasaray Square for 28 years since May 27, 1995, asking for clarification about their relatives who disappeared in the custody of state forces.

The mothers gathered at Galatasaray Square once again today to make a statement to the press on the 941st week of their action. The group was faced with a police blockade once again, with more police troops deployed to the area than usual.

The Saturday Mothers and human rights advocates were intervened by the police while making their statement.

At least 15 people were taken into custody during the police crackdown, including Eren Keskin, co-chair of the Human Rights Association (IHD) and IHD Istanbul branch chair Gülseren Yoleri. The police siege in the area continues.

## Background

The 700th weekly protest of the Saturday Mothers on August 25, 2018 was banned by a decision of the Ministry of Interior. The police detained the protesting mothers after a violent intervention in the heart of Istanbul.

47 activists from the Saturday Mothers, who were subjected to police violence and detained by the police, were brought to trial for violating the "Law on Meetings and Demonstrations".

Maside Ocak Kışlakçı, one of the victims of the police violence, filed a criminal complaint with the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office on September 10, 2018, due to the disproportionate use of force and the violation of her right to assembly, demonstration and march.

The Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office issued a verdict of non-prosecution on May 2, 2019.

Kışlakçı made an individual application to the Constitutional Court (AYM) on June 19, 2019. The decision made on November 16, 2002 in response to the application was published in the Official Gazette.

After evaluating the application, the Constitutional Court requested a defence from the Ministry of Interior, which argued that the application was inadmissible due to the statute of limitations.

The Constitutional Court also rejected the application in terms of ill-treatment, arguing that the applicant had received the assault report 15 days after the incident.

By a large majority and the opposition of judge Muhterem İnce, the court ruled that the right to hold meetings, demonstrations and marches was violated. The court also decided that Kışlakçı be paid for non-pecuniary damages.

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## 12 detained as police attack Saturday Mothers in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 15 APRIL 2023

Turkish police have again attacked the Saturday Mothers' initiative at Galatasaray Square in downtown Istanbul. The initiative wanted to make a statement on "disappearances" in state custody and demand punishment for the perpetrators on Istiklal Avenue. As in the previous week, demonstrators were attacked and taken into custody by the police.

The Chairperson of the Human Rights Association (IHD) Istanbul branch, Gülseren Yoleri, the Media Union President Faruk Eren as well as Hanım Tosun, Hanife Yıldız, Ali Ocak, Besna Tosun, Mikail Kırbayır, Jiyen Tosun, İrfan Bilgin, Hasan Karakoç, Kenan Yıldızlerler and Zekine Türkeri were taken away by the police. In the prison van, the detainees held pictures of their missing relatives on the windows and

made the victory sign. HDP MP Musa Pirođlu came to the square after the police raid and protested against the detentions.

The Saturday Mothers have been demanding information about their relatives who have disappeared since the 1990s at Galatasaray Square for decades. Since a massive police raid in August 2018, the rally in the square has been banned. By order of the Ministry of Interior, a new ban order is issued every week for gatherings of the group. However, according to a ruling by the Turkish Constitutional Court on 22 February 2023, this contradicts the right to freedom of assembly. Last week, the Saturday Mothers and their supporters therefore demanded the implementation of the ruling at Galatasaray Square. However, the Ministry of Interior and the Central Authority of the Turkish Police are still preventing the initiative from gathering in their traditional square. Last Saturday, 15 people were detained, including IHD co-chair Eren Keskin.



## Human Rights Violations

### ÖHD and IHD prepare report on Ferhat Atılđan's death

ANF | HAKKARI | 1 APRIL 2023

It was alleged that Ferhat Atılđan (26) who went to the courthouse to give his statement on 20 January in Yüksekova (Gever), in the province of Hakkari (Colemêrg), committed suicide by jumping from the 3rd floor of the courthouse after learning that he had been referred to the court with a request for arrest.

The Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) and the Human Rights Association (İHD) said that they have prepared a report as they are treating the man's death as suspicious.

#### 'Violation in the investigation'

The report said that the incident needs to be clarified, and said that some irregularities and violations of rights during the investigation and the questioning of Atılđan were recorded.

The two associations added that "it is an undeniable fact that detention in the region has turned from a precautionary measure to a measure of punishment and often exists as a first resort measure. This situation undermines citizens' trust in justice. Principles such as the right to a fair trial and personal security are vital principles in the formation of a just social system. In democratic states, personal security is accepted as the main reason for the existence of the democratic order. The main function of law is to create an order in which the individual feels safe. The judicial authorities have a very important role and function in ensuring this order. For this reason, the judicial authorities should approach from a security perspective rather than a libertarian perspective in terms of establishing trust in the law."



## Erçe speaks of activities by religious sects in earthquake-hit areas

ANF | 2 APRIL 2023

The great earthquake of 6 February with epicentre in Maraş caused great destruction in Turkey in ten provinces with a population of 13.5 million people. In places with predominantly Alevi populations, earthquake victims are subjected to a process of destruction by human hands under the control of the state and religious orders.

Cuma Erçe, the chair of the Pir Sultan Abdal Alevi cultural association, confirmed that state institutions were not on the ground to conduct search and rescue operations and provide assistance during the critical period of the first days after the earthquake. They arrived in the region days later, he said, and initially intervened in civil society relief networks. Remarking that the concept of the service was commercialised by them, he said: "Alevi organisations have performed many tasks of the state from the beginning. Our cultural association and similar organisations took over the essential tasks that should have been done by the state. There were reports in the media about the terrible scenes we experienced when we came to the region. Unfortunately, when the state arrived, we found that the organisations were selling people's donations. Tents were sold, blood donations were sold."

Erçe also confirmed the allegations of sectarian discrimination in the distribution of relief goods to the earthquake victims and stated: "We saw with our own eyes that there was discrimination in the distribution of relief goods. When we went to the villages, we tried to reach out to everyone indiscriminately. We did not say: 'This is an Alevi village, this is a Sunni village'. However, we saw that, on the contrary, the authorities in the region delivered more aid to non-Alevi villages and made more efforts. They dropped aid from helicopters. Unfortunately, they did not support the Alevi villages with the same effort."

Relief supplies collected by civil society organisations have been confiscated in several places, Erçe said, such as the Alevi community centre (Cemevi) in the district of Pazarcık: "The Cemevi in Hasankoca village has been turned into a centre for the distribution of relief supplies. A coordination was set up there. It included CHP MP Orhan Sarıbal, HDP MP Zeynel Özen, Dersim Mayor Mehmet Fatih Maçoğlu, SDP, EMEP, KESK components and SES. The office of the district governor confiscated the materials that had been collected with the joint efforts of all these organisations. They said that they would do this work themselves. A trustee was appointed, but not for the Cemevi, but for the relief materials."

Cuma Erçe also drew attention to the activities of Islamic organisations in the tent settlements built for the earthquake victims. "These have reached dangerous proportions. Although these activities are openly carried out in full view of everyone, no action is taken against them by official institutions and organisations. It was reported in the press that a sign for a Koran course for children aged four to six was hung up in the tent city that was set up in the first days in the Nurdağı district in Antep. They do this without hiding or concealing themselves. There are children who have disappeared, children whose parents have been buried under the rubble. We receive news that these children have been placed in residential homes run by

sects and the IHH. In Adıyaman. We have heard from our friends who have been there in person that thousands of tents have been provided to the Menzil sect, that container settlements have been built, that children who have lost their relatives have been handed over to them and that their education has been taken over by them. We have received hundreds of complaints from different tent cities on this issue."

Erçe emphasised that the Alevi community centres carry out many activities that the state should carry out in the region without any support. He concluded by saying, "We have buried thousands of deceased people. They were buried through our organisation. The Ministry of Interior constantly sends us messages of thanks through the Department of Associations because this task actually falls under its jurisdiction. The state collects taxes and donations and has the power. We didn't do it to do its job, but to fill the gap caused by the state."



## Police in Van take 20 people, 7 of them children, into custody

ANF | VAN | 4 APRIL 2023

Some 20 people, 7 of them children, were taken into custody following raids on many houses in the centre of Van.

An investigation carried out by the Van Chief Public Prosecutor's Office was presented as a justification for the police operation.

A 24-hour lawyer restriction, one of the arbitrary and systematic practices employed by the judiciary, was imposed.

On 3 April, 19 people, including HDP Youth Assembly members and Democratic Modernity magazine employee Sema Korkmaz, were detained in Istanbul and Izmir.



## 19 people detained in Istanbul and Izmir

ANF | 3 APRIL 2023

Numerous flats were stormed in Istanbul and Izmir in the early morning. 19 people were taken into custody and three more people are being sought. Members of the Youth Council of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and journalist Sema Korkmaz from the magazine Demokratik Modernite are among the detainees.

Those detained in Istanbul were taken to the police station in Vatan Street. They are accused of membership in a terrorist organisation, meaning the PKK. The proceedings are classified as secret and the detainees are denied legal representation.

Of those taken into custody, Sedat Uğraş, Muhammed Uğraş, Barış Ugun, Rojin Değirmenci, Osman Koçar, Serhat Yavaş and Sema Korkmaz are known by name so far.

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## Court in Istanbul upholds prison sentence for police who killed Berkin Elvan

ANF | ISTANBUL | 5 APRIL 2023

The 16 years and 8 months' prison sentence handed out to police officer Fatih Dalgacı, who killed Berkin Elvan was upheld. The young boy was killed by a gas canister thrown at his head during the Gezi Park protests in 2013. The 1st Penal Chamber of the Istanbul Regional Court of Justice upheld the sentence.

According to Medyascope, the court rejected the request of the lawyers of the Elvan family to sentence the defendant police officer Dalgacı for the crime of "qualified wilful killing", and also rejected the requests of the police officer's lawyers to acquit the accused, as the decision was against the procedure and the law.

If the decision is upheld by the Supreme Court, Fatih Dalgacı will be arrested and imprisoned.

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## 18 people to appear in Court today after 3 days in police custody

ANF | ISTANBUL | 6 APRIL 2023

As part of an investigation carried out by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, on 3 April police raided the homes of 18 people, including members of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Youth Assembly and journalist Sema Korkmaz, an employee of the Democratic Modernity magazine.

The detainees were taken to the Istanbul Security Directorate on Vatan Street. A confidentiality decision was brought to the investigation file, and it was learned that those detained were accused of "being a member of an illegal organization".

The detainees were asked questions about their attendance at the Kemal Korkut Football tournament and picnic organized by the HDP Youth Assembly, as well as about their participation in press statements and their posts on social media.

— ★ —

## 7 detained in Antalya for participating in Newroz celebration

ANF | ANTALYA | 6 APRIL 2023

Turkish police stormed several houses and detained 7 people in the southern province of Antalya on Thursday morning.

The detentions were made in the scope of an investigation launched by Antalya Chief Public Prosecutor's Office over participation in celebrations to mark the Kurdish New Year, Newroz.

The affected persons were reportedly taken into custody for participating in the Newroz celebration held in the city on March 19 and chanting slogans.

The detainees are expected to be referred to the courthouse after procedures at the police department.



## DFG releases report on violations against journalists in March

ANF | AMED | 6 APRIL 2023

The Dicle Fırat Journalists Association (DFG) published its Report on Rights Violations Against Journalists in the month of March. The report said that as the elections are looming, the crackdown on the press is increasing gradually.

### Censorship law

The report remarked that the "Censorship Law" was used as a justification for the detentions of journalists.

It added: "As the elections are approaching, journalists continue to be detained and prosecuted under this law. As we warned before, it could constitute an obstacle to the freedom of press and expression. Therefore, we emphasize once again that we will continue our struggle until the law is withdrawn."

### Jailed journalists

The report also addressed the situation of 16 journalists who were detained in Amed on June 8 and jailed on June 16: "For 10 months, no decision has yet been made regarding the indictment submitted by the prosecution to the Diyarbakır 4th Heavy Penal Court. We expect the court, which has been examining the indictment since March 28, to release our jailed colleagues immediately. We will continue our struggle until they are released."

The report listed the rights violations in the month of March as follows:

**Violations of journalist's right to life and security:** Journalists attacked: 8; Journalist whose house was raided: 1; Journalists detained: 16; Journalists jailed:1; Journalists subjected to ill-treatment:4; Journalists threatened:1; Journalists blocked from coverage: 12

**Violations of the freedom of the freedom of thought and expression:** Journalists investigated: 4; Journalists prosecuted: 5; Journalists sentenced: 3; Jail term given to journalists: 2 years; Fine: 48,746 TL

**Journalists on trial:** Number of Files: 41; Number of Journalists: 77; Imprisoned Journalists (as of 01 April 2023): 87; Violations of Journalists' Economic/Social Rights; Journalists dismissed: 2

**Bans on press and media organizations:** RTÜK suspension of TV programs: 13; Number of Penalties: 10; Broadcast Ban: 1

**Denial of access to internet-digital medias:** Closed Website: 8; Ban on news articles: 330; Ban on social media content: 1084



Both a migrant and an earthquake victim: “As Syrians, don't we have the right to life?”

ZEYNEP KURAY | HATAY | 8 APRIL 2023

In Turkey, refugees are made scapegoats at every opportunity. Both the government and the opposition threaten them with deportation to their countries of origin with far-right propaganda in election promises. Even in the event of a major disaster like an earthquake, they are systematically discriminated against. To travel within the country to another province, they have needed a permit from the Directorate of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior since 2017. To leave the earthquake-affected region, they rely on a 60-day permit.

Mehmet Shehyar from Aleppo is both a migrant and an earthquake victim and spoke to ANF about his situation. The Syrian man is a women's clothing designer and came to Turkey to work back in 2009, before the war in Syria. He says he received a work permit and worked in a textile workshop in Istanbul and had no problems. After the war broke out in Syria in 2011, he had to bring his family from Aleppo to Turkey. His children were sent to school in Hatay. As he tells it, his life was turned upside down in 2017 when the Directorate of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior decided that Syrians who wanted to travel from one province to another needed a travel permit: "To travel from one province to another, you have to apply for a permit at the Migration Management Directorate. And even then, the permit is only granted for 15 days. I could only go to Istanbul if I had permission from the Immigration Department in Hatay, where I am registered. That applied even for medical treatment."

This 2017 measure curtailed the right to freedom of movement and was exacerbated by another decision of the Directorate of Migration Management after the earthquake, Shehyar said and continued: "I was in Istanbul during the earthquake. Luckily, nothing happened to my wife and children in Antakya, but the house we were staying in was badly damaged. As soon as I heard about it, I returned to Antakya. After the earthquake, the migration authority ordered another special measure for Syrians. Since we had nowhere to stay, I asked for permission to go to my mother in Afyon. However, we could only stay there for 30 days because there was no work and no money. My damaged house and all my belongings are here. I had to come back to Antakya with my family, but now I can't go to Istanbul because I can't get permission. My hands are tied."

Shehyar is staying with his family in a tent at one of the solidarity and aid distribution points set up by political parties in Hatay. He accused the Turkish government of discriminatory practices against Syrians. "I was born Syrian, what is my crime?" asked Şehyar and added: "I am a designer of women's clothes. I draw models, make patterns and design them. Everything here is destroyed, there is no work. I have to go to Istanbul to work, but I am not allowed to. We are homeless. How long are we supposed to live in a tent? Children don't have school anymore either. We need a container at least, and I hope there will be no discrimination again. I don't know what to do. I am both a migrant and an earthquake victim. My family has been affected by a war and an earthquake. The earthquake is worse than the war. As Syrians, don't we have the right to life? Is that what we should understand by this practice? I want this discriminatory practice to be lifted."



## People's Municipality allocated houses to 2,300 families after earthquake

ANF | ALEPPO | 9 APRIL 2023

Aleppo's Şêxmeqsûd and Eşrefiye People's Municipality provided housing aid to 3,000 families who were left homeless as a result of the earthquake that took place on February 6 and 21.

The Municipality's Science Office published a report on earthquake damage on 17 February 2023.

### Housing provided to 2,300 families

Under the coordination of Şêxmeqsûd neighbourhood's east and west councils and with the approval of the municipality's tender commission, housing was provided to 2,300 families living on high floors in Şêxmeqsûd and Eşrefiye neighbourhoods.

After this decision, tents set up in streets, parks and empty spaces were removed.

Municipality Contract and Reconciliation Commission Member Menan Ebdi said that after the earthquake, a solution was reached under the coordination of the municipality administration and the General Assembly.

Ebdi pointed out that housing will be allocated in the west of the neighbourhood for families whose houses are now uninhabitable and are in danger of being demolished.

Stating that the transfer of the residents is done in an organized manner between the municipality and the communes, Ebdi continued: "The transfer will take place in two stages. The first will be with the approval of the municipality and with the help of the communes. In addition, new contracts have been prepared for the residents."



## Police take two people into custody in Cizre

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 11 APRIL 2023

Police raided the Cudi and Nur neighbourhoods in Cizre early this morning. Special operations police raided many houses, breaking doors and looting goods.

A person named Faruk İverendi in Nur and Diyar whose surname could not be learned in Cudi were taken into custody.

The reason for the detention was not disclosed. Meryem Iverendi, mother of Faruk Iverendi, said: "There is nothing they have not done to us. They searched my house. They have thrown our children on the floor. They have stepped on my son's back with their feet and kicked him. My son has bruises all over his body. They locked us in a room and shouted and called us names."



## Prison sentence sought for Kurdish journalist İsmail Çoban

ANF | AMED | 11 APRIL 2023

The retrial of İsmail Çoban, former Editor-in-Chief of Azadiya Welat newspaper which was closed by a Government Decree (KHK), continues on the allegation that some news and articles published by the newspaper between September 4 - September 30 2014 and October 1 - October 21 2014 conducted "propaganda for a terrorist organization".

While Çoban did not attend the hearing held at Diyarbakır 5th High Criminal Court on Tuesday, his lawyer Resul Timur was present. The prosecutor demanded 1 year, 8 months and 25 days jail time for Çoban in accordance with "Article 7/2 of the Anti-Terror Law No. 3713" which regulates "organizational propaganda". The prosecution argued that since the crime was committed through the press, the prison term for Çoban should be increased in accordance with Article 43 of the Turkish Penal Code (TCK).

Çoban's lawyer requested extra time to defend his client against the prosecutor's opinion.

The court adjourned the hearing to April 18.

According to the Dicle Fırat Journalists Association (DFG) Report on Rights Violations Against Journalists in the month of March, the crackdown on the press is increasing gradually as the elections are approaching. The association reported that 8 journalists were attacked, 16 others were detained, one journalist was jailed, and 330 news were blocked in March.

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## Victim of "helicopter torture" in Van sentenced to 7,5 years in prison

ANF | MERSIN | 11 APRIL 2023

The third hearing in the lawsuit against Osman Şiban, who was tortured and thrown off a helicopter by Turkish soldiers in the Çatak district of Van province in 2020, was held at Mersin 2nd High Criminal Court on Tuesday. Şiban is accused of "membership in a terrorist organization". While Şiban did not attend the hearing, he was represented by his lawyer.

Reiterating his opinion in the previous hearing, the prosecutor demanded a jail term for the 51-year-old Kurdish man for "membership in a terrorist organization", meaning the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party).

The court sentenced Şiban to 7 years and 6 months in prison and ruled that the ban imposed on him to leave the country would remain in effect.

Lawyers will appeal against the court decision.

### Background

The indictment of Osman Şiban is seen as an act of revenge by the controlled judiciary and the military. The Kurdish man is both a witness and a victim of one of the most serious attacks by the Turkish army on the Kurdish civilian population in recent years. Together with 55-year-old Servet Turgut, Osman Şiban was detained by soldiers from a Turkish operations unit near Çatak district of Van during field work on 11 September 2020. After severe torture, they were pushed out of a military helicopter and they suffered serious injuries.

After the ordeal, Osman Şiban and Servet Turgut were taken to different hospitals. The military told the medical staff that the two men were terrorists and had been injured when they tried to escape from a helicopter. Şiban survived the ordeal while Servet Turgut died after twenty days in a coma.

As evidence for Osman Şiban's alleged PKK membership, the indictment lists, among other things, three spare fuel canisters that were allegedly discovered in open ground in a hamlet in Çatak. Because Şiban's house, which he only lives in during the summer - the rest of the year he lives in the coastal metropolis of Mersin - is close to where they were found, the canisters could only have been taken there by the 51-year-

old, the prosecution argues. They also say that the area of the hamlet where Şiban's house is located was flown over by a reconnaissance drone on 9 September 2020. The evaluation of the collected data is alleged to have shown that at the time of the control flights, there were activities in the area that "did not fit coherently into the usual flow of life". Last but not least, the prosecution refers to the statements of a supposed witness who - if he exists at all - claims to have stated that Osman Şiban's house had been regularly visited by PKK cadres Murat Karayılan and Mahsum Korkmaz (killed in Gabar on 28 March 1986) in the 1980s and 1990s.

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## Yoleri: There is no longer democracy in Turkey

ANF | ISTANBUL | 11 APRIL 2023

The Human Rights Association (IHD) Istanbul Branch head Gülseren Yoleri spoke to ANF about the AKP government's human rights violations. Yoleri noted that people were tortured to death in prisons and torture continued in detention centres even during the period when the government launched its campaign dubbed "zero tolerance to torture". Yoleri said that the basic attitude was preserved when the government introduced European Union reforms. Yoleri cited trials of journalists, the Anti-Terror Law, the MIT Law, the regulations concerning the duties and responsibilities of state officials, the manipulations in the previous constitutional referendum, the disregard for the constitution and the law. She said: "The authoritarian regime has been institutionalized and there is no longer democracy in Turkey."

### Tolerance of the international system

The human rights advocate remarked that one of the reasons for this lawlessness caused by the AKP government is the tolerance of the international legal system towards them. Yoleri pointed out that international law often turned a blind eye to the violations of rights in domestic laws. "This government has violated the laws. Just as it has violated domestic laws, it has also made away with international laws. It does not care about ECtHR decisions. It frustrates the CPT's reports or some human rights mechanisms. The reason why the government can act so recklessly is because it has not seen enough reaction from the international community."

### IHD and elections

Addressing the IHD's stance on the upcoming May 14 elections, Yoleri said: "We have demands, of course, but we do not favour any party. We favour parties that promote human rights and democracy. We want democracy and human rights to prevail in this country. We want peace. We want freedom. We want a state of welfare. We want living conditions to be affordable for everyone living in the country. Therefore, we can support any party which promises to realize them. We do not favour any party, because the IHD is a movement that distances itself from the state, government and parties, but as I said, whoever advocates human rights, peace and democracy is valuable to us."

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## ISIG: At least 463 workers lost their lives in first three months of 2023

ANF | ISTANBUL | 12 APRIL 2023

ISIG has published its report for January, February and March 2023 on occupational homicides.

According to the report, 130 workers died in March, and 463 workers lost their lives in the first three months of 2023. This means that at least 5 workers die every day.

ISIG said it established the number of deaths by getting “67 percent of information from the national press, and 33 percent from information we obtained directly from workers’ colleagues, families, occupational safety experts, workplace doctors, unions and local press.”

Worker deaths were registered mostly in Istanbul (76), followed by Semsûr (65), Hatay (36), Maraş (16), Bursa (13) and Kocaeli (12).

While the two Maraş-centered earthquakes were the leading causes of death with 24 percent of the total, 19 percent of the deaths were caused by traffic accidents and 13 percent by falling.

37 of the workers who died were women and 426 were men. 5 of the dead were children and 24 immigrants and refugees. When broken down by business lines, 72 deaths occurred in construction/road works, 69 in accommodation, 52 in transportation, 40 in agriculture and forestry, and 39 in the chemical and tire industry.

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## Society for Threatened Peoples calls for protection and support for Iraq's Mandaean community

ANF | GÖTTINGEN | 13 APRIL 2023

The Society for Threatened Peoples (GfbV) has called for protection and support for the religious community of the Mandaeans in Iraq. According to the human rights organization in Göttingen, only between 5,000 and 20,000 of the approximately 100,000 members of this religious community worldwide still live in Iraq.

The Mandeans are an ancient monotheistic religious community whose most important ritual is baptism. That is why their houses of prayer are situated on flowing waters. The community refers to John the Baptist, who is considered the forerunner of Jesus Christ in the Bible. In contrast to Christianity, however, Mandaean believers experience baptism as a purification ritual several times in their lives. They also follow dietary rules and eat mostly vegetarian food.

In a personal conversation with the GfbV Middle East expert Kamal Sido, the Mandaean chief, Ganzevra Sattar Jabbar Hilo Al-Zahrany, as well as other Mandaean dignitaries, appealed to the Iraqi government not to give up its efforts to strengthen this small religious community and also to give them political offices take into account. They appealed to German politicians to meet with the Mandaean community when visiting Iraq.

### **Establishment of a state-approved academy for Mandaic language and religion**

It would be important to appoint Mandaean ministers in Iraq or send Mandaean ambassadors abroad, the Mandaean dignitaries stressed during the Easter Saturday talks at their chief's residence in Baghdad. The community also needs financial support to set up a state-approved academy for Mandaic language and religion. According to Sido, the approximately 2,200 Madaeans in the German diaspora urgently need support for the construction of a place of worship. Sido also explained that during the visit he noticed that more and more Christian believers are leaving Baghdad. "If the last Christians in Iraq are to have a future, the government must make them feel welcome in their homeland."

### **Number of Christians in Iraq has shrunk to 150,000**

In 2003, around 1.5 million people of the Christian faith still lived in Iraq. After the Iraq war and expulsions by the Islamic State, their number fell from an estimated 300,000 in 2014 to around 150,000 today. Around 97 percent of the 43.5 million inhabitants of the Near Eastern country are Muslims.



## **Journalist faces investigation over report on execution of a civilian in Mardin**

ANF | MARDIN | 15 APRIL 2023

Another investigation has been opened against Kurdish journalist Ahmet Kanbal. The correspondent of the Mezopotamya Ajansı (MA) news agency is accused of reporting on the extrajudicial execution of a civilian by the Turkish army in the province of Mardin. The civilian is Lokman Görgün, a father of eight children, who was killed together with his nephew, the unarmed HPG fighter Musa Kahraman (Nom de Guerre: Xebatkar Bagok), near the village of Cinata on 8 April.

The Mardin chief public prosecutor's office accuses Kanbal of spreading false information based on his MA reports and posts on digital networks about the case. On Friday, the journalist was summoned by the police. Kanbal complied with the summons accompanied by legal counsel. During the interrogation, Görgün and Kahraman were described as PKK members. Kanbal explained to the police that Lokman Görgün was a 53-year-old father of eight children who lived in his village by herding cattle. Contrary to what Turkey's Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu claimed, Görgün was clearly a civilian. Ahmet Kanbal said that he himself, as a journalist, reported on the violation of a civilian's right to life.

Ahmet Kanbal has been in the crosshairs of the Turkish judiciary for years. The journalist had to answer for alleged terror propaganda in several trials, including for reports on corruption and clientelism in the usurped municipalities in Kurdish cities or for articles in connection with the Turkish war of aggression against the formerly self-governing canton of Afrin in northern Syria in 2018. A year ago, Kanbal was sentenced to one year and three months in prison for "naming actors in the fight against terror". The trial stemmed from a complaint filed by Musa Çitil, a notorious commander in the gendarmerie (military police). The latter had taken offence at a post by the journalist on Twitter about his past as a rapist in the service of the state. On appeal, the verdict was overturned and Kanbal was acquitted.

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## IHD co-chair taken into custody

ANF | ISTANBUL | 15 APRIL 2023

Eren Keskin, co-chair of the Human Rights Association (IHD) was taken into custody in Istanbul on Saturday.

"I am being taken into custody at Sabiha Gökçen Airport," Keskin wrote on her social media account.

According to the reports, Keskin was detained because of her social media posts.

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## CDK-F condemns sentences inflicted on 11 Kurdish activists in Paris

ANF | PARIS | 16 APRIL 2023

The CDK-F (Kurdish Democratic Council – France) said in a statement that it is "deeply shocked by the very heavy sentences inflicted on the 11 Kurdish activists who are nothing but defenders of human rights and democracy."

On 14 April 2023, the Paris Criminal Court delivered its verdict in the case of 11 Kurdish activists accused of belonging to the PKK, sentencing them from three to five years of imprisonment.

The statement added: "We strongly condemn this decision motivated by political and not legal considerations. The Kurds are peaceful people who seek to exercise their democratic rights and fight against all forms of discrimination and oppression.

It is clear that the terrorist character is used only when it comes to repressing the Kurds. Because when it comes to prosecuting crimes committed against the Kurds, French justice does not use the terrorist qualifi-

cation, as evidenced by the refusal of the anti-terrorist prosecutor's office to take up the case of the attack against our premises who killed three Kurdish militants on 23 December 2022."

The statement continued: "We are appalled by these decisions which clearly show that the Kurds face blatant political discrimination in France. We demand the immediate release of all Kurdish activists imprisoned in France and other European countries.

We urge the French authorities to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Kurds and not to allow themselves to be influenced by political pressure. We also call on the authorities to shed full light on the attack on our cultural centre and to prosecute those responsible, in order to ensure that such horrific acts never happen again."

The CDK-F called "on the international community, human rights organizations and the media to put pressure on the French authorities to respect the rights of Kurds in France and around the world, and to do all that is in their power to protect the Kurds against violence and persecution."



## Family of Lokman Görgün applies to İHD after his extra judicial execution

ANF | MARDIN | 16 APRIL 2023

On 8 April, HPG guerrilla Musa Kahraman (Xebatkar Bagok) and his uncle Lokman Görgün were executed on the village road in the rural neighbourhood of Cinata in the Omeriya (Ömeryan) region of Mardin (Mêrdîn).

Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu claimed that they were both PKK members and, with this, it justified the execution. However, it soon came to light that Lokman Görgün, 52 years old and father of 8 children, was living farming in the village.

The villagers and families stated that there was no conflict in the region, contrary to what was claimed by the Turkish authorities. It was suspected that Görgün and Kahraman were executed when they got together.

The HPG Press Center made a statement on 13 April and said: "Our comrade Xebatkar Bagok, who was on duty in the rural area of the village of Cinata in the Omeriya region of Mardin, on 8 April, and his relative, esteemed patriot Lokman Görgün, fell as martyrs as a result of the attack carried out by the Turkish army. The Turkish army extra judicially executed Lokman Görgün, a civilian, unarmed and innocent Kurdish patriot, and committed a war crime."

Görgün's family applied to the Human Rights Association (İHD) Mardin Branch to denounce the extra judicial execution.

In their application, the family stated that Görgün was attacked by unidentified people while riding a motorcycle. "Until now, neither our father's motorcycle has been shown to us, nor any evidence," the application said.

The family added: "Our father was not a member of any organization. He was a farmer, father of 8 children, who lived on his own, and was engaged in animal husbandry. We think that he was killed in an extra judicial execution by the Gendarmerie."

The IHD is expected to file the necessary criminal complaint to the Mardin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.



## Four people including a minor detained in İdil

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 16 APRIL 2023

Turkish police stormed houses in İdil district of Şırnak early Sunday morning. Four people were taken into custody during simultaneous raids in the neighborhood of Turgut Özal. Those detained in the operation include a sixteen-year-old boy, named Yusuf Duman. While the reason for the operation was not disclosed, the number of detainees is expected to increase.



## Criminal complaint against soldiers who tortured a lawyer in Hatay

ANF | İZMİR | 17 APRIL 2023

The İzmir branches of the Contemporary Lawyers Association (ÇHD), the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD), the Human Rights Association's (IHD) and the Lawyers Group in İzmir released a statement denouncing an attack by Turkish soldiers against lawyers in the Samandağ district of Hatay. ÇHD İzmir Branch director Beste Salman delivered a speech at the ÇHD office on Monday.

Salman noted that the debris removal work has caused serious harm to the people of the region struck by two devastating earthquakes on February 6. She said: "Earthquake survivors are trying to reach the authorities and voice their reaction by keeping vigils for life. The gendarmerie and other law enforcement forces are violently suppressing the just demands of the earthquake victims. Our organizations, which endorse the rightful demands of the people, stand by the earthquake survivors against these violent attacks on vigils for life."

Salman recalled that lawyers who went to the region to defend those taken into custody during a vigil in Yeşilköy on April 2, were also attacked. She continued: "Lawyer Aytekin Aktaş was severely tortured by

10-15 gendarmerie officers while he was doing his profession. He was taken to a separate area away from his client in a detention vehicle. He was brutally beaten and had all his clothes torn by soldiers who threatened him with death, citing the state of emergency in the region. He was released without any formal procedures after being tortured for a long time while handcuffed behind his back. After his release, he was tortured for a second time when he wanted to take down the plates of military vehicles and the names of the torturers."

Salman concluded: "This torture was directed against the laws, lawyers and the people's right to life. We have filed a criminal complaint to call this arbitrary persecution to account. We will bring torturers to account. 'We are not gone, we are here', as people say during the vigils."

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## Journalists Çoban and Güleş sentenced to prison

ANF | 18 APRIL 2023

The retrial of İsmail Çoban, Editor-in-Chief of Azadiya Welat newspaper which was closed by a Government Decree (KHK), continued on the allegation that some news and articles published by the newspaper between 4-30 September 2014 and October 1-21 October 2014 spread "propaganda for a terrorist organization", meaning the PKK.

At the hearing held at the Diyarbakır 5th High Criminal Court, the prosecution repeated its demand in the previous hearing, demanding a prison sentence of 1 year, 8 months and 25 days.

Çoban's lawyer, Resul Temur, said: "Considering the fact that my client is a journalist and the news articles which are the subject of the trial consist of activities carried out for the purpose of reporting, it is obvious that he should be acquitted. The allegation made against my client and the prison sentence sought for him result from his journalistic activities."

The court board said that the 1 year- and 8-month prison sentence announced before the dismissal of the case involved a calculation error and sentenced Çoban to 1 year, 6 months and 22 days in prison.

On the other hand, Mehmet Güleş, a correspondent for DIHA news agency that was shut down in 2016, was sentenced to 1 year and 9 months and 25 days in prison.

The second hearing of Güleş's retrial, which started following the reversal of a prison sentence of 3 years, 1 month and 15 days, was held at the Elazığ 2nd Heavy Penal Court on Tuesday. Güleş is accused of "making propaganda for an organization" through his social media posts containing news articles.

The first hearing of the case was postponed due to the earthquake on February 6. In the second hearing today, Güleş and his lawyer, Resul Temur, connected to the courtroom via sound and video information system from the Diyarbakır Courthouse.

The prosecution demanded that journalist Güleş be sentenced for "making propaganda for a terrorist organization."

Considering that the previous sentence of 3 years, 1 month and 15 days was overturned by the Court of Cassation due to "disproportion", the court board sentenced Güleş to 1 year, 9 months and 25 days in prison.

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## General Elections in Turkey

### Four candidates to run for president in Turkey

ANF | ANKARA | 1 APRIL 2023

The candidates for the office of President of Turkey have been determined. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will face three challengers on 14 May, according to a list of candidates published in the Official Gazette on Friday night. In addition to Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the main opposition CHP party, Muharrem İnce and Sinan Oğan are also listed for the election in around six weeks.

Observers expect the presidential election to be a two-way fight between Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu. Depending on the polls, the CHP leader, who is the leading candidate of a six-party alliance, is polling between 46 and 57 percent. Erdoğan is polling between 40 and 46 per cent.

İnce has less than eight percent in the polls. In any case, his candidacy gave rise to discussion about whether he was not splintering the opposition and thus acting against his declared goal - namely to have the regime eliminated. In 2018, İnce was defeated by Erdoğan as the candidate of his former party, the CHP. The populist lost badly in the first round and now wants to try it with his home party, which he founded two years ago. Sinan Oğan, candidate of the far-right alliance ATA and former member of the far-right party MHP, is also considered an outsider.

In the first round of voting, a candidate must win more than 50 per cent of the votes. If this does not happen, there will be a duel between the two strongest candidates two weeks after the first election date. On 14 May, the Turkish parliament will also be re-elected. The Labour and Freedom Alliance, which also includes the HDP and the Green Left Party, has not put forward a presidential candidate.

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### Lawyer Eren: "Erdoğan's calls confirm our view"

RONI ARAM | 1 APRIL 2023

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) is the third largest party in Turkey's parliament. Since 2021, proceedings to ban the party have been pending before the Turkish Constitutional Court. A date of 11 April has been set for the HDP leader's oral defence. The request for a stay of proceedings until after the elections on 14 May was rejected by the court. At the same time, however, the Constitutional Court lifted the ban on public party funding imposed on the HDP earlier this year. Of the 15 members of the court, eight voted in favour of lifting the financial blockade.

Court reporter Seyhan Avcı of Halk TV reported on Thursday that an unnamed member of the Constitutional Court told her that Turkish President Erdoğan had called some members who voted to lift the ban and expressed his disappointment. This is the first time a member of the Constitutional Court has made the government's direct intervention public.

Lawyer Serhat Eren from the HDP Commission for Law and Human Rights spoke to ANF and stated: "We have said from the beginning that the lawsuit against our party is political. We have stated that there is no legal aspect to this case and that the proceedings were initiated under pressure from the government and as part of a political lynching campaign. If we go back even further, we come to the multi-dimensional operation launched against our party after 2015. Even then, our political destruction was decided. It was an operation aimed at completely liquidating the Kurds, who make up the main part of our party, from the political arena and rendering them incapable of acting. The idea of the HDP was meant to be completely eliminated. This plan was part of the annihilation plan (Çöktürme Planı) against the Kurdish movement adopted by the state in 2014, which has been implemented since Erdoğan unilaterally broke off talks on a solution to the Kurdish question. The HDP has constantly raised this issue."

Lawyer Eren also pointed out that already the financial freeze by the Constitutional Court had no legal basis: "The General Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation twice requested the freezing of the accounts containing the state aid, but the Constitutional Court rejected this request. On 5 January, shortly before the date on which the grant was to be paid, the Constitutional Court, at the request of the Prosecutor General of the Court of Cassation, took this circumstance into account and blocked our accounts, although there was no difference with the previous requests. This procedure is not regulated in the Constitutional Court's founding statute and does not occur in Turkey's domestic legislation. There was no legal legitimacy for the Constitutional Court to take a decision in a precautionary measure while the case was still pending."

Serhat Eren interprets Erdoğan's call to the members of the Constitutional Court, reported in the press, as an admission of what is already known: "We had already stated that the decision to block was made under pressure from the government. Now we have learned from the press that Erdoğan called the judges and held them accountable. This is a statement that justifies all our previous statements in which we strongly emphasised that the proceedings were opened politically and on the instructions of the government.

"The fact that Erdoğan is calling members of the country's highest judiciary and holding them accountable shows very clearly. The judiciary is completely subordinated, dependent, dominated and pressured by the government, including Erdoğan. It has reached a point where it acts completely according to the instructions of the AKP/MHP government. Therefore, it is not possible to predict the Constitutional Court's decision on the closure of our party. It appears that the seven members who voted against the annulment will act completely politically, regardless of the documents, information and evidence we have presented. It is therefore difficult to predict how the other members will ultimately act in relation to the

closure. The decision to lift the lock does not mean that these members will take the same stance in the event of closure."



## Freedom House: Turkey's elections among most vulnerable in the world

ANF | 1 APRIL 2023

Turkey's May 14 presidential and parliamentary elections are considered among the most vulnerable in the world, Freedom House's Election Vulnerability Index shows, scoring behind countries like Pakistan, Zimbabwe, and Bangladesh.

Turkey scored 33 out of 100, obtaining low points in all three categories of the report. The country scored 9 out of 32 in the digital sphere category, 13 out of 32 in the electoral system and political participation category, and 11 out of 36 in the human rights category.

Freedom House states that score reflects the government's concentration of power, strict laws that make online expression a criminal offense, and extra-legal efforts to silence independent journalism and stifle dissent.

The watchdog had previously evaluated Turkey as not a "Not Free" in the "Freedom in the World 2023" report published earlier this month.

However, Freedom House notes that the six-party alliance challenging incumbent President Erdoğan pledges a sharp departure from these policies if it wins power.

The opposition could gain momentum in response to public dissatisfaction with the economic crisis and inadequate state support following the earthquake.

As a result, President Erdoğan's re-election chances appear to be in serious jeopardy.

The political freedom monitor underscores the thousands of websites blocked and the removal of at least 1,197 news pieces in the first year after the social media law, enacted in 2020.

Detaining and prosecuting journalists, activists, and citizens for their critical comments, news reporting, and online discussions of government officials could lead to self-censorship in the lead-up to elections. This is exemplified by the detention of at least 24 social media users for criticizing the government.

Freedom House draws attention to the fact that Turkey's Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) blocked access to the websites of DW and VOA last year on the basis that they did not obtain a broadcasting license.

This form of technical censorship results in a lack of access to accurate information and various sources before going to the polls. Additionally, the democracy watchdog alerts that the recently implemented 'Disinformation Law' can be used against internet users before the ballots open on May 14.

The government is encouraging social media users to rely on information published by the government, which tends to favor the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), by claiming that disinformation is prevalent, according to the Washington-based think tank.

Yet, the AKP itself employs a troll team consisting of approximately 6,000 people who manipulate online conversations, promote their own political agenda, and challenge anti-government opponents on social media, Freedom House indicates.

For example, in 2019 a video circulated on numerous pro-government social media platforms that suggested that İstanbul's mayor and a prominent figure in the main opposition party, Ekrem İmamoğlu, was calling on terrorist organizations to take control of the country.

The report further points out the vulnerability created by the state of emergency declared in the ten provinces affected by the February 6 earthquakes, possibly limiting fundamental rights.

Officials in the region can block campaign materials and rallies in the online and public spheres and restrict the political activities of opposition parties, the rights monitor highlights, referring to the blockade of Twitter for 12 hours 'to prevent disinformation from spreading' in the wake of devastating earthquakes in southeastern Turkey, and the access ban to Ekşi Sözlük, a popular social networking site.

The rights monitor shows that the AKP, which introduced some liberalizing reforms in its early days, has since 2016 put pressure on its opponent. Over the past decade, electoral laws have been revised, judicial independence has been undermined, and harsh measures have been taken to curb opposition.

Moreover, the 2017 constitutional amendments converted Turkey into a super-presidential system, where the president can appoint the government without the parliament's approval or interpretation.

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## ECtHR rejects Turkey's appeal against a ruling on 13 HDP members of parliament

ANF | 4 APRIL 2023

The ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on the arrest of former HDP co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ and twelve other former HDP MPs in Turkey is final. The Grand Chamber of the Court rejected the Turkish government's appeal against the ruling and refused to hear an appeal.

Last November, the ECtHR ruled that the detention of Yüksekdağ and her colleagues in 2016 violated fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and the right to vote and stand for election. As in the

case of Selahattin Demirtaş, the Strasbourg-based court ruled that their arrest was politically motivated and violated Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The ECtHR also ordered Turkey to pay 184,600 euros in compensation.

The case against Turkey before the ECtHR was brought by Figen Yüksekdağ, and by Idris Baluken, Besime Konca, Abdullah Zeydan, Nihat Akdoğan, Selma Irmak, Ferhat Encü, Gülser Yıldırım, Nursel Aydoğan, Çağlar Demirel, Burcu Çelik, Leyla Birlik and Ayhan Bilgen, who resigned from the HDP after his arrest.

The mass arrests of leading members of the HDP ordered by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 4 November 2016 marked the beginning of a phase of repression that continues to this day, aimed at rendering the second largest opposition party in Turkey incapable of acting. In addition to numerous members of parliament, countless people with leadership responsibilities at the local level were also put behind bars. In this context, the HDP speaks of a political coup.



## Green Left Party Europe Coordination calls for mobilisation abroad to win 10 million votes

ANF | 5 APRIL 2023

The European Election Coordination of the Green Left Party (YSP) wants to win ten million votes in the parliamentary elections in Turkey.

In a statement on Wednesday, the European Election Coordination of the Green Left Party said: "The elections in Turkey on 14 May are only a short time away. We are planning and developing the different stages of the electoral calendar we are facing abroad. As we know, the elections abroad will start on 27 April and end on 9 May. The first stage of the preparatory work we started in March for the elections was mainly dedicated to voter survey and re-registration. During this period, thanks to the valuable efforts of the electoral coordination and relevant institutions, thousands of new voter registrations were made, thus achieving a very important success."

The Green Left Party, supported by the Labour and Freedom Alliance and the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), announced an election programme in Ankara last week under the title "We are here, we will change things together". The YSP's election coordination in Europe also endorses this slogan and focuses on using the remaining time in a results-oriented way. In the second phase of the election campaign, the motto is that all participants should win at least ten votes each for the YSP. The goal is ten million votes, according to the European Coordination, which further stated the following:

"We know that the HDP received more than six million votes in previous elections. There are millions of eligible voters who are angry with the AKP/MHP alliance, which has plunged Turkey into a political, economic and social crisis, insists on a war against the Kurdish people and builds and maintains its regime through war.

Moreover, there are millions of hopeful people inside and outside Turkey who believe in women's freedom, democracy, ecology and the fraternity of peoples. When we say, 'We are here, we will change things together', we carry hope against despair. That is why it is important for those eligible to vote who have migrated abroad for political, economic and many other reasons to take an active role in the elections and to organise themselves.

The future belongs to us, the future belongs to the forces of democracy and the peoples. As Kurds, Turks, Turkmen, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, Circassians, Laz, Bosnians, Pomaks, Hamshenis, Alevis, Muslims, Yazidis and Christians, we call on all our institutions and electoral coordinations to work with a creative style of organisation to reflect our colour and will for the future.

Under the circumstances, we say that it is not enough for all eligible voters to just cast their votes. At the same time, all YSP voters have the task of convincing their neighbours and their environment to vote for the Green Left Party. Since even this is not enough to get ten million votes, we call for mobilisation abroad to convince at least ten eligible voters in Turkey to vote for the YSP."

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## HDP refuses to give an oral defence before the Turkish Constitutional Court

ANF | ANKARA | 6 APRIL 2023

In the closure case against the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the chairpersons Pervin Buldan and Mithat Sancar will not give an oral defence before the Turkish Constitutional Court, announced the party's legal committee in Ankara on Thursday. The reason for the decision was that the court unfoundedly rejected several requests by the HDP to suspend proceedings until after the presidential and parliamentary elections on 14 May. "In doing so, the Constitutional Court is guilty of blatant interference in free and fair elections", stated the party's executive board.

Since June 2021, the proceedings to ban the HDP have been underway before Turkey's highest court. The party is accused of terrorism and separatism, among other things. The HDP, on the other hand, speaks of a politically motivated trial. Since January, the legal committee has made three different requests for a postponement of the trial and a postponement of the date for the first oral hearing, which had been set for next Tuesday.

The party argued, among other things, that the party leaders would be in the midst of an election campaign at the time of the scheduled hearing, and that the country and its people had been in a desolate situation since the earthquake disaster in February. However, the Constitutional Court rejected all applications without giving reasons, the committee said.

"It seems impossible to conduct the oral defence in this trial, which will have a significant impact on the history of democracy and law in Turkey, within the current intensive work period," the HDP's legal committee said, adding that, therefore, the decision was taken not to attend the date on 11 April.



## AKP makes people members without their knowledge

ANF | VAN | 7 APRIL 2023

The AKP has repeatedly been exposed for having made illegal membership registrations in the past. Now, a few weeks before the 14 May elections, a new fraud has emerged in Van. The AKP is making people members of its own party without their consent and knowledge. Some people in Van filed a criminal complaint against the AKP, after they found out to have been registered as members of the party without their consent.

Lawyer Cemal Demir said that there are many people who have applied to them to expose this situation and that they have taken the matter to the judiciary. "It is a known fact that the AKP has been illegally registering members for a long time, and that people are made members against their will and consent. Hundreds of thousands of citizens learned that they were made members of the AKP without their knowledge, especially after the e-government application made it possible to question political party membership."

### Complaining through e-government application

Lawyer Demir said: "After the news about the supposed 11 million AKP membership repeated this week, my client, who is a public official who is also a member of a democratic union, made a political statement through the e-state system. When he questioned his party membership, he surprisingly realized that he and his wife, who is also a public official, were made members of the AKP without their knowledge. They stated that they would immediately take legal action and file a criminal complaint in order to identify the people who made these false memberships. We know that there are thousands and even hundreds of thousands of similar fake memberships. Everyone should question their political party membership through the e-government application. If a false membership is detected, a criminal complaint must be filed."



## More than 42,000 prisoners have the right to vote

RONI ARAM | ISTANBUL | 8 APRIL 2023

Less than 40 days are left for the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held on 14 May. While the candidate lists are being announced, on the other hand, the technical but important details of the election, such as the list of voters and address of polls are also on the agenda.

One of the places where voting will take place is prisons. As Turkey is a country where the capacity of prisons and the number of detainees are increasing rapidly, the election results and security here are of great importance. As of the end of January 2023, there were 341,497 people in prisons in Turkey. According to the data of the Ministry of Justice, 298,975 of these people are convicted and 42,522 are on remand.

The voting process of the prisoners whose addresses are registered in the prisons is done through the ballot boxes set up here. Ballot box officers are appointed in each prison by the YSK (Election Committee). In addition, parties with a group in the parliament can also have ballot box committee members on official assignment. However, since the HDP did not enter the elections under its own name and the Green Left Party is not represented in the Parliament, it will not be able to have any members on the ballot box committees.

Talking about the importance of ballot box security to ANF, ÖHD Prisons Commission co-spokesperson Vedat Ece said: "As we all know, prisons are areas where the prisoner, the officers and everyone inside are completely isolated from the outside world. The only way to ensure ballot box security in these places is for ballot box officers and political party officials assigned by the YSK to do their job properly. It is vital that the final minutes and vote bags are delivered to the district election boards in a healthy manner after the election is over."

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## Green Left Party announces its candidates in 81 provinces

ANF | ANKARA | 10 APRIL 2023

The Greens and Left Future Party (Green Left Party) announced the parliamentary candidate list for the 14 May general elections.

The list, which was completed as a result of the work of the Candidate Reconciliation Commission, was submitted to the approval of Green Left Party co-spokespersons Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar and İbrahim Akın.

The list of candidates approved by the co-spokespersons was then presented to the Supreme Election Board (YSK) by the party executives and lawyers.

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## EŞİK says women representation still low in party's lists

ANF | ANKARA | 11 APRIL 2023

The Women's Platform for Equality (EŞİK) issued a written statement regarding the candidate lists of the political parties that will enter the elections. Emphasizing that the lists of candidates submitted to the Supreme Election Board (YSK) by the political parties that will enter the elections on 14 May are far from equal representation, the statement said: "Although there are many female candidates who disprove the claim that women do not want to enter politics, still very few women were included in the lists."

## **Women put in places where they could hardly be elected**

Noting that the majority of the women included in the lists were placed in constituencies where they could hardly be elected, the statement said: “The proportion of women was artificially high. Still, there is not a single political party that uses the zipper method to achieve gender equality. In the lists, the zipper system was used not to increase the number of women, but to equalize the number of deputies between parties.”

## **‘Equal representation should be made a constitutional obligation’**

The statement continued: “In the first constitutional amendment, the principle of equal representation in all elections and appointments should be made a constitutional obligation. Under-representation lists should be rejected by election boards. Appointments that violate the principle of equality should be revoked. Equal representation is essential. We will fight until we have equal representation with legal guarantees.”



## **Green Left Party fields more female candidates than any other party**

ANF | 11 APRIL 2023

Political parties have submitted their lists of deputy candidates for the 14 May elections to the Supreme Election Board (YSK). The ruling AKP and its partner MHP, which tolerate femicides, harassment and rape cases, ignored women in their candidate lists.

40 percent of the candidates of the Green Left Party, which adopts the so-called zipper system, are women. Women’s candidacy stands at 26 percent in the CHP list, 19 percent in the AKP, and 12 percent in the MHP.

## **No room for women within the people’s alliance!**

Only 113 women were included in the list of 600 parliamentary candidates submitted by the AKP. THE AKP’s ally, MHP, listed only 73 women to be nominated. While 18.83 percent of AKP candidates are women, MHP’s women candidates stand at 12.16 percent.

## **No zipper system for the Nation Alliance**

The list submitted by the Republican People’s Party (CHP) includes 580 candidates. Only 153 of these candidates are women. 145 of the candidates of the IYI Party, which listed 385 candidates, are women. While 26.37 percent of the CHP candidates are women, the IYI Party’s women candidates stand at 37.66 percent.

## Green Left Party fields 40 percent women candidates

The Party of Greens and the Left Future (Green Left Party) adopted a zipper system in their lists. Out of 490 Green Left Party candidates, 193 are women, with 39.38 percentage.

Of the 398 candidates listed by the Workers Party of Turkey (TIP), which is a member of the Labour and Freedom Alliance, 161 are women.

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## HDP closure case file handed over to rapporteur

ANF | 12 APRIL 2023

The People's Democratic Party (HDP) on Tuesday did not attend the hearing at the Constitutional Court (AYM) which was set by the supreme court as the plea date for the party in the HDP Closure Case.

In the judicial process that started after the indictment prepared by the Chief Prosecutor's Office of the Court of Cassation for the closure of the party was accepted on June 21, 2021, it was first decided that the HDP officials would plead verbally on March 14, 2023.

An extension of time was granted to the party upon their request and the plea date was postponed to 11 April. However, the request of the party to postpone the plea date to a date after the 14 May elections was rejected.

On 6 April, the HDP submitted a petition to the supreme court stating its decision not to plead verbally today.

The General Assembly of AYM discussed on Tuesday the decision of the party not to plead verbally and recorded it. The assembly decided for the case file to be handed over to the AYM rapporteur in order for the opinion as to the accusations to be prepared.

### HDP closure case

The Court of Cassation launched an inquiry against HDP on March 2, 2021, and the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Cassation, Bekir Şahin, applied to the Constitutional Court on March 17, 2021, demanding the closure of the HDP and many of its members being banned from politics.

A two-thirds majority, or votes of 10 of the 15 Constitutional Court members, are necessary to close the party or to impose other sanctions on the party, such as wholly or partially depriving it of public aid.

Those who have been imposed a political ban will not be able to be founders, members, executives, or supervisors of any other political party for five years.

## Politically motivated legal labyrinth

The HDP, the third largest party in parliament, is prevented from participating in the elections by Erdoğan's regime's politically motivated closure case. In order to escape this politically motivated legal labyrinth and the risk of being closed down, the HDP decided to contest the elections on 14 May under the Green Left Party.

The HDP European Representation had called for an international solidarity statements against this arbitrary closure on 13 March, with dozens of parties and hundreds of parliamentarians from more than 22 countries expressing their solidarity.



## Beştaş: We will enter the Parliament with a strong group

ANF | ISTANBUL | 12 APRIL 2023

HDP deputy group chair and one of the Green Left Party's Erzurum deputy candidates, Meral Daniş Beştaş, told ANF, that "first of all, we are facing a 20-year government that has complicated every aspect of life. This government does not improve, but rather disrupts things. It almost turned the country into a complete wreck. Turkey is experiencing deep problems in terms of freedom of expression, the right to engage in politics, economic rights and liberties."

Stating that no one has security and freedom in the country, Beştaş said: "No one has economic security, personal freedom, political freedom. There is great social pressure. The way out of this is to get rid of this government. This is a government that does not keep what it says, makes the opposite of its economic moves, changes its own laws dozens of times, and tries to intimidate our party with the help of the judiciary. It has reached a final point in every sense; administrative, political, social. There was a great reaction and anger. In this respect, these elections are historical and the people will have the last word."

### 'It is important to enter the parliament with a strong group'

Beştaş said that it is important that the Green Left Party enters Parliament with a strong group, and that for this they have put the parliamentary elections in the first place. "The Assembly election is a top priority. We are trying to ensure representation in the widest sense. Both in the Kurdish provinces and in every region of Turkey. Why? Because we defend the coexistence of the peoples of Turkey, living in equal and free conditions. The 100-120 deputies we get will be very important. Because the current government will fall, melt, break up. The thing that binds this alliance together is corruption. When they lose their seats, there will be no element that binds them together. They will end up like ANAP and the DYP. Therefore, it will be of great importance that we reflect the will of the people to the Parliament. It will become a platform. We are trying to send the representatives of the provinces to Ankara. It is vital that we enter the Parliament with a strong group almost because of the constitutional amendment and the existing decrees."

## 'Isolation in İmralı is a torture to the people'

Beştaş added that "isolation in İmralı is the biggest unlawfulness in this country. Why? Because the legal regulations are very clear. Detainees and convicts have the absolute right to communicate regardless of who they are. Nowhere in the world are phone calls, letters, family views, lawyers so restricted. Connections with the outside world are not cut off even in isolation cells. In İmralı, as we always say, Mr. Öcalan has no connection at all with anyone. Is he there or not? Maybe he is in another prison. Is he ill or in good health? I don't want to say it, but the question everyone is asking him/herself is whether he is alive or not. Because there is no information at all. There can be no great unlawfulness. This is torture for the people and their families."

Beştaş continued: "This also has a political dimension. We know how great reactions have emerged on this issue in the past. Mr. Öcalan was the main interlocutor in the solution to the Kurdish problem. He played his role for 2 and a half years: the peoples breathed and looked to the future with hope. Most of the Kurdish people recognize it as willpower. Isolation is another way of not solving the Kurdish problem. And it is also the name of continuing the war. Peace and the demands for a solution are met with isolation. The isolation imposed by political motives and purposes must be lifted."

Meral Daniş Beştaş said that Erzurum is a city where different identities live, and added: "I know that we are strong in Erzurum. When my candidacy was announced, our comrades from Turkey, Erzurum and abroad called me. We will represent the will of the people of Erzurum in parliament."

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## Kurdish rappers release election song for Green Left Party

ANF | ANKARA | 12 APRIL 2023

The Greens and the Left Future Party (Green Left Party) introduced the candidates for the 14 May general elections at an event held at the Ankara Chamber of Civil Engineers (İMO) Headquarters. The election song prepared by rap group Kejoo, Reqso, Alchemist and Roni Artin for the Green Left Party Youth Assembly was presented at the event and released on all social media.

You can watch the video from here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeSp7qc-Qu8&t=78s>

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## Racist attacks against the Green Left Party offices in two cities

ANF | 12 APRIL 2023

The Green Left Party (YSP) offices in Ankara and İzmir provinces have been targeted by racist attacks.

The attack in Ankara targeted the YSP election office in the Mamak district. The YSP officials stated that the flags of the party were torn down and the Turkish flag was hung in front of the office.

The attack on the YPS election office in the Menemen district of İzmir was carried out by two assailants who shared images of their action on the social media.

The party officials stated that they couldn't file a complaint against the assailants as they were under age.



## Supreme Election Board announces overseas voting schedule

ANF | 12 APRIL 2023

According to the Supreme Election Board (YSK), voting abroad will begin on April 27 at 177 representation offices in 74 foreign countries, and votes will be cast until May 9.

Overseas voting in foreign representations will take place between 09.00 and 21.00 local time weekdays and on weekends, and between 09.00 and 18.00 local time in cities where there are consulate generals.

Citizens of Turkey will also be able to vote at any of the designated representative offices or at any customs stations where ballot boxes are set up. The procedure requires no appointment.

In the event of a second round in the presidential election, voters will be able to cast their votes on May 20-24.



“We want an equal, free life for the peoples of Turkey, and we will build it”

ANF | 13 APRIL 2023

The Supreme Election Board (YSK) in Turkey announced last week that seven million first-time voters are eligible to vote in the parliamentary and presidential elections on 14 May. In total, there are 64,191,285 eligible voters. Rohat Gövercin, the co-spokesperson of the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) Youth Council and a member of the party's executive committee, spoke to ANF about his demands and expectations.

Former MHP politician Sinan Oğan, one of the racist presidential candidates, said on a TV channel that one third of the seven million young people who will vote for the first time are HDP supporters and will vote for the Green Left Party (YSP). The HDP contests the elections under the YSP umbrella because of the ongoing closure case against it.

Rohat Gövercin said: "As we know, seven million people will vote for the first time. However, if we look at the Newroz celebrations, which we can call a referendum for the Kurdish people and their friends, not only will one in three vote for the YSP, there will be many more. Newroz was celebrated with enthusiasm and an overwhelmingly large proportion of those taking part were young people. Patriotic Kurdish youth and the youth of Turkey will play a crucial role in the 14 May elections, just as they have made Newroz 2023 a youth event. The main reason why fascist groups considered this potential dangerous was the clear formulation of demands for Newroz. The youth expressed their will, and the youth will shape their future. We think it is quite normal that they are afraid of it, and we want to emphasise again that the inevitable end will come for them too."

### **"We demand equality and freedom for all peoples"**

Gövercin noted that youth has been the driving force of life since the beginning of history and demands an equal and free life for all peoples of Turkey today. "With the annihilation plan against the Kurdish freedom movement decided by the Turkish state in 2014, the youth in particular have come under great pressure. The youth are meant to be weakened by a special war policy. However, one must understand the reality of the HDP correctly. The HDP could not be liquidated in the last years despite thousands of arrests and detentions in the last eight or nine years. It continues to resist. This is the main reason why AKP/MHP fascism has declined so much."

Gövercin continued: "We attribute the fact that there is more talk of rights in Turkey, and especially for the youth, to the price paid by the Kurdish freedom movement. When we ask what the youth want, we should also ask how they have participated in history. There is a youth that participated in the fronts of the world wars, a youth that was used as slaves in the construction of the Egyptian pyramids; but there is also a youth that we do not hear about and that we do not put in its own bracket. We believe that the current government's policy towards youth is no different. Since youth identity is a social phenomenon, our demands are not only for the youth but for the whole society. We, the youth, who have been the subjects of life and shaped events throughout history, want an equal, free life for the peoples of Turkey, and we will build it."

### **War policy at the centre of the problem**

Rohat Gövercin emphasised that under the current conditions, the war of extermination against the Kurds is crucial for the youth's fear of the future. "If we look at the working youth and the students separately, we can clearly say that we see no future for either group in the current government," said the HDP youth spokesperson, pointing to the causes of the economic crisis in Turkey: "The fact that no job opportunities are being created for the working youth and that young people who will finish school or university do not see a future and prosperity in their own fields of work is actually based on a very deep-rooted problem."

We place the war policy to destroy the Kurdish people at the centre of our fear for the future. We attribute the lack of confidence in the country to the billions of dollars spent on bombs and bullets. We will oppose the war policy and work together with society for prosperity."

## "We must overthrow the government"

Appealing to the youth, Rohat Gövercin concluded: "Our election appeal to the youth is actually very clear. We all have pent-up anger and demand change. There is a reality of a free country that we all long for. To achieve this, we must rally around the Green Left Party, work 24 hours a day if necessary, especially as young people, and overthrow the fascist AKP/MHP government."

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## Kurdish religious scholar: AKP abuses religion

ANF | AMED | 13 APRIL 2023

Mele Yusuf Andan, a Kurdish religious scholar and member of the Democratic Islamic Congress (DİK), criticized Erdoğan and AKP members' way of doing politics by abusing religious concerns.

He stated that in Turkey, the holy book is not considered as a reference for law and order but is used in the government's favour. "They are waging wars, killing people and doing business under the guise of religion," he added.

In an interview with ANF, Mele Yusuf Andan stated that Islam has been misused by governments and rulers in the Middle East and Turkey for thousands of years. The Kurdish religious scholar remarked that the essence of not only Islam but also other religions was manipulated in the Middle East. He continued: "These exploiters of religion are Muslims without Islam. Religious states and mongers in the Middle East have used the Qur'an as their shield. They do not consider this holy book as a reference for law and order. They use it in their own favour. They are waging wars, killing people and doing business under the guise of religion."

Andan commented on the criticism directed at presidential candidate of the Nation Alliance, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who unwittingly stepped on a prayer rug during an election event a short time ago. The religious scholar said: "Everywhere is a prayer rug for Muslims. As a matter of fact, the cleanest prayer rug is dry soil. I don't think that even an atheist would step on a prayer rug on purpose. A prayer rug has no function. Religious exploiters seek to use such things in their favour. Unfortunately, people do not have enough knowledge about these issues. This is our failure. If we had raised awareness of these matters, we wouldn't be discussing them today".

"Nowadays, our people think that those who use religious terminology are true Muslims, but they are not. For example, Abu Jahl was also a very good religious man, but he was against justice, rights and laws. He was called Abu Jahl because he was against justice. A person who does not seek justice is an ignorant person. Currently, there are the likes of Abu Jahl. They put forward unsound arguments to stay in power. To maintain power, they persecute people. Currently, we are ruled by incompetent people. Those who are incompetent are also ignorant."

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## Şenyaşar family: "We will bring democracy and justice to the country together on 14 May"

ANF | URFA | 17 APRIL 2023

On 14 June 2018, the bodyguards and relatives of AKP Urfa MP Ibrahim Halil Yıldız attacked the Şenyaşar family's shop in Suruç during the election campaign.

In the attack, brothers Celal, Adil, Mehmet, Fadıl and Ferit Şenyaşar were injured. Relatives and supporters of AKP MP Yıldız, badly injured Celal and Adil Şenyaşar, and their father Hacı Esvet Şenyaşar, when he went to the hospital to visit their sons. He was brutally murdered, being lynched in front of his wife Emine Şenyaşar.

Mother and son begun their Vigil for Justice on 9 March 2021. On the 755th day of the vigil, Emine and Ferit Şenyaşar said from their house in Suruç (Pirsûs) that "those who massacred will be held accountable."

The family posted a message on their Twitter account: "There is a government that continues to break the laws they have passed. On 14 May, we will bring democracy and justice to the country together. Those who committed cruelty and massacres by relying on Erdoğan will be held accountable before an independent judiciary."

Ferit Şenyaşar was injured in the attack carried out in 2018. On 14 May he will contest the elections as a candidate for the Green Left Party.

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## Over 64 million people eligible to vote in elections in Turkey and abroad

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The head of the Turkish Supreme Election Board (YSK), Ahmet Yener, announced on Monday that 60,697,843 million people are eligible to vote in the parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey on May 14.

30,710,790 of those eligible to vote are women, making up 50.60 per cent of the total. On the other hand, 3,416,098 people will go to the ballots abroad.

Many people in the country are calling the upcoming vote a fateful election between autocracy and democracy, the outcome of which will have a significant impact on the political situation in the entire region and beyond for years to come. The presidential election is expected to be a neck-and-neck race between incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AKP) and his main rival Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP). The voters

of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which is contesting the elections under the umbrella of the Green Left Party (YSP), have a key role to play, as they are considered kingmakers.

Young people in particular are likely to play an important role in the elections this time. Around five million first-time voters in Turkey will be called upon to cast their ballots, said Yener.

In the meantime, the YSK will announce details of the elections in the provinces affected by the earthquakes at a later date. Two major earthquakes with the epicentre in North Kurdistan shook the south-east of the country on 6 February. According to official data, more than 50,000 people died and millions are homeless. Of the 3.7 million people who left the region as a result of the earthquakes, only about 133,000 have registered to vote in other provinces, according to Yener.



## Interview

### Sabri Ok warns of possible provocations ahead of crucial elections

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The member of the Executive Council of the KCK (Community of Kurdistan Societies), Sabri Ok spoke about current issues in a special program on Stêrk TV. Ok made a series of remarks about the presidential and parliamentary elections on 14 May in Turkey.

Ok said: "A group within the AKP wanted to develop moderate Islam through Erdoğan and caused a stir from the Middle East to Africa. They pushed this through with the help of the US and Europe. In order to attack the Kurdish people, organizations like ISIS and al-Nusra were supported, financed and armed. They acted with these organizations to liquidate the PKK and break the will of the Kurdish people. They are all united against the Kurdish people, including Ergenekon, because their interests are the same. The state under the AKP and Erdoğan represents the mentality of the Republic of Turkey. This will either continue, or there will be a rupture in the Republic's oppressive mentality. The international powers have withdrawn their support from the Turkish government. It has nothing left to maintain its power. Therefore, these elections are very important to get rid of the AKP-MHP government and the century of repressive mentality of the Turkish state."

#### Possible provocations

Ok warned of possible provocations in the run-up to the elections. It is not clear what kind of provocations the government will carry out before the elections, but the likelihood is high, Ok said, adding: "It is

obvious that the AKP-MHP government will lose. It is aware of it which is why it is willing to do anything to avoid defeat.”

In response to a question about the Green Left Party (YSP) and the Alliance for Work and Freedom, in which the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) is the largest party, Sabri Ok said: "Who do they think the PKK is? The PKK is an ideological and political movement. Our goal is to do politics. Of course, we support certain people and not others. How much support we give to whom and how much we don't depends on our values, ideology, politics, tactics, strategy and work. So what does the AKP want from the PKK? It wants the PKK not to talk about politics at all. Of course, we do politics, but as an ideological movement we have other tasks and responsibilities. Political, legal, democratic movements are something else. How they work is their responsibility, but our job is to voice our views.”

### **The sword of Damocles hovers over the HDP**

The KCK has always said that there are no rights and no justice for the Kurdish people, said Ok, adding: "The Kurdish people have no status. Of course there are Kurds and they have legitimate rights, but the Turkish state does not recognize that. He did not include them in his constitution. This is also reflected in the policy of repression against the HDP and other democratic parties. The sword of Damocles hovers over the HDP. The reason for this is that it is a party in which democratic, liberal and socialist Turkish and Kurdish forces are represented. Many forces are united in the HDP, and that's a good thing. The closure of the HDP is on the agenda. On the day the lists of candidates are finalized, a decision will be made as to whether the HDP will be dissolved or not. The whole world knows that.”

### **The decision to run with the Green Left Party is correct**

Sabri Ok continued: “The HDP and the Kurdish democratic politicians have experience. Some parties have already been closed, some parties have been dissolved, but the Kurdish people, democratic forces and other communities still exist and even grow in the face of this pressure. The Kurdish people and their friends stand united with the democratic and socialist forces in Turkey and make democratic politics. Elections are coming up and the HDP and the democratic forces will contest them. They will run with the Green Left party against these political attacks on the elections. This is a very correct decision. The Kurdish people and the democratic political movement have learned lessons from the past. Changing their parties and logos is a matter of a day. The HDP will not lose anything in this situation.”

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## **HDP’s Temel: Our goal is to end the one-man regime**

ALI BARIS | 2 APRIL 2023

The deputy co-chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Tayip Temel, spoke to ANF about the HDP's strategy for the 14 May elections in Turkey and called for support for the Green Left Party (YSP). Justifying why the HDP or Green Left Party has not put forward its own presidential candidate, Temel said in reference to the consequent support for the opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP): "We have seen that we do not disagree with Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu on basic principles such as the democratic solu-

tion to the Kurdish question. We insist on our principles and shape our practice accordingly." The HDP politician called for "courageous steps" to solve the Kurdish question.

*The HDP has put its focus in the election campaign on issues related to the democratisation of the country. Now the HDP has not put forward its own candidate for the presidential election. What is the connection here?*

Our party plays a decisive role in the politics of the country through what it does or does not do and what it supports or does not support. We are electorally decisive. All eyes are on us. It is with this in mind and based on our responsibility to our people that we issued a statement on 27 September 2021 announcing our principles for the politics of the country. We established the principle that we will not oppose and will even support those who are in favour of democracy and freedom. Our principles are formulated in eleven points. These are also a call. We have called for a discussion on the major problems of the country, especially the Kurdish question, on the basis of these principles. We have titled this paper "Call for Justice, Democracy and Peace". Regarding the presidential elections, we have made it clear that we should discuss these principles and not names. In the discussions we have had, we have seen that we have no disagreement with Mr Kılıçdaroğlu on the basic principles of our declaration, such as strong democracy, an impartial and independent judiciary, ending communal receivership and a democratic solution to the Kurdish question. To reiterate; no one who stands for democracy and freedom can oppose these principles. They are as important to society as bread and water. That is why we insist on our principles and shape our practice accordingly. The meeting we had with Mr Kılıçdaroğlu in Parliament took place on this basis.

*What does it mean not to make a statement of support for a candidate in the first phase?*

Frankly, we have been at the same point since the declaration of 27 September 2021. Our policies and discourse are in line with this declaration. As I have just said, we have said from the beginning in relation to the presidential elections that principles are important to us, not names. We had already stated this at the time. Today, we remain convinced of it. Our goal is to end this one-man regime that is plaguing the country. We have worked hard to determine the most appropriate ways and methods to achieve this. The issue of nomination of candidates has been discussed intensively in the authorised bodies of our party. We sought the opinions of our rank and file and the peoples. Initially, the tendency to nominate a candidate was stronger. However, the earthquakes of 6 February made us revise our assessments. As a result of the AKP/MHP government's policies based on profit and plunder, we lost more than 50,000 people. Thousands froze to death because the rigid centralist administration did not react and did not intervene for days in the earthquake areas. We witnessed with great anger how the Erdoğan regime left people to their fate after the earthquake. People rightly object to the so-called presidential system and the AKP/MHP government. The circumstances have changed. As the Labour and Freedom Alliance, we communicated this to the public at a press conference. The fact that we are not fielding a candidate does not mean that we are dismissing our voters in the presidential elections or boycotting the elections.

*There were debates within the Labour and Freedom Alliance, to which you also belong, about the question of whether one could stand on joint lists everywhere or whether one could also stand separately. The TIP and the EMEP have managed to get themselves listed separately. What are the risks in this context?*

Indeed, the best method in terms of all the oppressed and working people would have been to contest the most important elections in history with a single list. However, the TIP and EMEP, which are part of the

Labour and Freedom Alliance, saw fit to contest the elections with their own party logos under the umbrella of the Alliance. This outcome came about despite the long negotiations in the joint meetings. Undoubtedly, this decision brings difficulties. This is because, due to the new electoral law, each party in the alliance has to rely on itself. Unfortunately, even if we as an alliance achieve enough votes to get an MP in a province, we will not be able to get an MP because these votes will be distributed among the three parties. Moreover, since we are not running with our own list in some places, there is a risk that the seat we could not get then will go to another party.

*What measures have been taken against this risk?*

People can rest assured. We are working with great care and assessing all kinds of risks. All possible precautions are being taken. There is no need to worry. What needs to be done is very simple. All people need to do is to put a "yes" everywhere under the logo of the Green Left Party. If we put our stamp everywhere we see the purple trunk of the YSP, there will be no problem. If we carry the Green Left Party as the strongest representative of the oppressed and labourers to the parliament in these important elections, all machinations will come to nothing, and all risks will be eliminated.

*It is said again and again that these elections are a turning point. What specifically distinguishes these elections from others?*

It may sound like a cliché, but these elections are actually very, very critical. When we say that the 2023 elections will be a watershed, we are not saying that to motivate people. The 2023 elections will indeed be fateful elections for the country. There are only two options. Either we stop fascism or fascism will grow stronger and suffocate society. This is not a joke, there is no other way. This is why the elections on 14 May 2023 will be the most critical elections in history. You know, on the roads, for example, when we cross the Bosphorus, we sometimes see a sign saying "Last exit before the bridge". The elections on 14 May are just like that. It is the last exit before the bridge. Either we will take the road to fascism, or we will choose democracy and freedoms. It is as simple as that. That is why, frankly, we do not think that the 2023 elections will be elections where everyone measures their own power and puts on a show. We cannot afford such a luxury. If fascism wins, it will be too late.

*What would be the impact of the presence of the Green Left Party in parliament with a hundred or more MPs?*

In both the presidential and parliamentary systems, the parliament plays an important role in the legislative process. If the Green Left Party enters the parliament with a hundred deputies, the oppressed, the marginalised and those whose rights and laws are not protected in Turkish politics will have a decisive influence on what laws are made and how in the parliament, and most importantly, they will have a say in the new government. The legal regulations of the two hegemonic blocs that prioritise capital, profit and destruction will be prevented. In other words, the election of a hundred or more Green Left MPs will be a guarantee for the defence of society not only against one party, but against both blocs.

*Your party focuses in particular on the end of the current regime. The programme for the time after has faded into the background. What can you say about the perspective?*

On the eve of the second century of the republic, we are entering an electoral campaign in which we will witness a historic showdown of the blocs within the system. As those who are excluded and marginalised in this country, we insist on the third way. For this reason, we are not looking at the forthcoming elections in a manner limited to a showdown of the blocs within the system. We have put forward a series of objectives to organise and strengthen the third way and to ensure that it will be decisive in the new period. In this context, we advocate a line that is not content with removing the government and creating a new one, but also changing the existing order and making this change sustainable.

*In the opposition there is confidence that the AKP/MHP government will be defeated, and in pro-government circles there is concern ...*

First of all, the opposition should not be caught up in the climate of unrest and fear that the government wants to create with regard to a solution to Turkey's historical problems. Courageous statements on historical problems, especially on the Kurdish question, will both shatter the psychological climate that the government wants to create and stop those who benefit from social polarisation.

In this context, it can be said that society is far ahead of the two hegemonic blocs within the system. The goal of politicising society's leadership and bringing it together with the perspective of the democratic republic will both open the doors to victory and be an antidote to conformist obstacles such as complacency.

*There have always been provocations and fraud in past elections. How do you see this danger in the current election process?*

The AKP/MHP government will, of course, use all kinds of tactics and tricks to win the elections. We are dealing with a criminal government that has no moral principles, that has experience with theft and that considers every opportunity to win as legitimate. We know this, but if we put ourselves in a passive position because of it, we will lose. It is said that elections are won at the ballot box. The security of the ballot box will be very important in these elections. We have made preparations to ensure that not a single vote is stolen, but the opposition must work together and unite in protecting the ballot boxes. If people had not protected the ballot boxes in the last elections in Istanbul, the fraud would probably have been covered up. To prevent this, we must take care of the ballot boxes. We should not be complacent until the last ballot box is opened, and we should not allow votes to be stolen. For this, we are ready for all partnerships.

*How will the nomination process for candidates work?*

Of course, as in every legislative period, what the people want and who they want to see in parliament is taken into account. However, as these elections are different from the previous ones, the candidates should be people who can represent the will of the people in parliament and defend their rights. We want them to come from the people as much as possible. In addition to representatives of peoples, beliefs and cultures, workers, civil servants, pensioners, farmers and students should also be able to enter parliament and defend the rights of the segment to which they belong in parliament. The commissions pay the utmost attention and care to this during the nomination process.

*There are one and a half months until the election. Now it is important to make the Green Left Party known. Do you have any appeals to the voters?*

We are contesting the elections with the Green Left Party. The logo of the Green Left Party and the HDP are similar. This is a big advantage for us. For illiterate people, it is important that the logo is similar. Moreover, we come from a tradition where every smallest activity is crucial. We will visit every house and introduce and explain the Green Left Party. The logo of the Green Left Party looks like a tree and a human being. It symbolises the past through its roots, the present through its trunk and the future with its branches. It is exactly the logo that fits our paradigm.

*On 30 March, the election programme was announced. The election slogan and the election song were presented. Can you say something about this?*

We will run a campaign that carries the claim of the struggle, its conviction and its principles from the past to the future. We will convey the message that we will not leave our peoples without an alternative against all kinds of political conspiracies, that we are facing a great challenge and that we are the force of change. We will run the most exciting and promising election campaign ever. We are full of enthusiasm and great fervour. Despite the repression, we will send the message that we are here and together we will make a difference. And we will definitely achieve that.



## Muslim warns against an anti-Kurdish alliance against AANES

MUSTAFA ÇOBAN | HESEKE | 16 APRIL 2023

At the beginning of April, the deputy foreign ministers of Syria, Turkey, Iran and Russia met in Moscow. There is talk of a rapprochement between the regimes in Ankara and Damascus. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is seeking to end the isolation of the Syrian government in the Arab world and the full rehabilitation of Bashar al-Assad in the region, including the readmission of Syria to the Arab League at the next summit in Riyadh. Apparently, the regime is trying to envisage a return to the diplomatic arena and an agreement with Turkey also at the expense of the Turkish-occupied areas of Syria. In an interview with ANF, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) co-chair Salih Muslim criticised Damascus for not having set concrete conditions such as Turkey's withdrawal from Syria during the talks.

### "The syrian regime is hostile to Kurds"

Muslim underlined that the Kurdish people should pay attention to the quadripartite meetings between Russia, Iran, Turkey and Syria. "The Syrian regime is hostile to the Kurds. Turkey is the strategic enemy of the Kurdish people. Iran's approach to the Kurdish issue is no different. Russia wants to bring all these parties together for its own interests. They are coming together at a table to get rid of the Kurds of Syria. Their only and common problem is the Kurds, and they are interested in eliminating the autonomous administration that defends the rights of all communities, creates unity and presents many projects here in northern and eastern Syria. If Russia were really interested in solving the problem in Syria - we have had relations since 2012 - it could have solved the problems with the regime. But unfortunately, this has not

been done so far. Russia takes a pragmatic approach. It acts according to the perspective: 'How can I benefit from the different sides?' The countries of the quadripartite meetings are not seeking a solution to the conflict for Syria; they are working to deepen existing problems in the country and create new ones. We hope they will turn away from this wrong course."

### **Damascus planning to form a joint force**

Remarking that the conflicts between the regimes in Damascus and Ankara are very deep, Muslim continued "We are talking about hundreds of thousands of people who have lost their lives and millions who have had to flee. We are talking about the destruction of 70 per cent of the infrastructure in the villages and towns of Syria. Turkey is the cause of all this. It has occupied large areas of the country from Afrin to Idlib to Girê Spî and has stationed many jihadist militias there, including Al-Qaeda. Turkey continues to support these groups to this day and has deployed these criminal gangs and its own troops. All these actions constitute a plot against the Kurds and the autonomous administration. These four states are in agreement on the Kurdish question. Now, what could an agreement on other issues look like? In our opinion, Damascus is planning to form a joint force against AANES together with Turkey and mercenaries."

### **"We have fought against all kinds of terror"**

Muslim recalled that the people of Rojava fought against all mercenary groups supported by the Turkish state and liberated the occupied areas. He added: "The plan of these forces is unacceptable. We are taking measures against it. They think that if they eliminate the Kurds, the USA will disappear from the region. The US is not here because of the Kurds. They are in the Middle East because of their own interests."

### **"Damascus does not demand withdrawal from occupied territories"**

Salih Muslim pointed out that Damascus did not make the withdrawal of Turkish troops from the occupied zone a condition for Ankara at the diplomatic meeting in Moscow, as some media outlets have reported. In fact, in mid-March - and thus in the run-up to the quadripartite meeting - Assad said in an interview with the Russian news agency RIA-Novosti that "any dialogue" with his Turkish counterpart depended on reaching the point where Turkey showed a willingness to withdraw "completely and unconditionally" from Syrian territory.

"This means that Damascus wants a clear and credible roadmap presented on how a withdrawal of the Turkish occupiers from Syria should take place. Russia is supposed to vouch for this plan. These demands are correct, but the expectation that Turkey, even if it were to make corresponding concessions, would ultimately adhere to them is a pipe dream. Turkey never sticks to agreements. We are certainly not against Syria and Turkey meeting at the same table and maintaining good neighbourly relations, but the current approach is not right. The word of Turkish fascism is not to be trusted. Turkey says one thing but, in reality, does something completely different. It makes promises and does not keep them. Lessons should be learnt from past experiences."

### **"We support the establishment of syria's relations with the Arab League"**

The PYD co-chair recalled that when the Syria issue arose, his party called for a solution to the conflict in the Arab League. He continued: "Today, all options have changed. We have never been against Arab states and establishing relations with them. We are not against Syria becoming a member of the Arab League."

But the Arab League has sown a lot of enmity and spilled a lot of blood, and the regime in Damascus has not taken a step towards democracy until today, neither in relation to the people and the problems the country is facing, nor on the international level. The regime firmly expects to be able to turn back the clock to 2011. Why then did the Arab League exclude Syria from its meetings in 2011? Re-admission can certainly be discussed, but there would have to be conditions. One condition should be the democratisation of Syria, respect for its own people. We, too, belong to Syria. We have not wanted enmity or division, not for a single day. We also want them to be united. We want Syria to have relations with all members, be it Egypt, Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates. We are not against it. What is important for us is that there is democracy in Syria and that this country respects its people. Let's solve the internal problems together. As part of Syria, regime change and democratisation are important for us too."

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