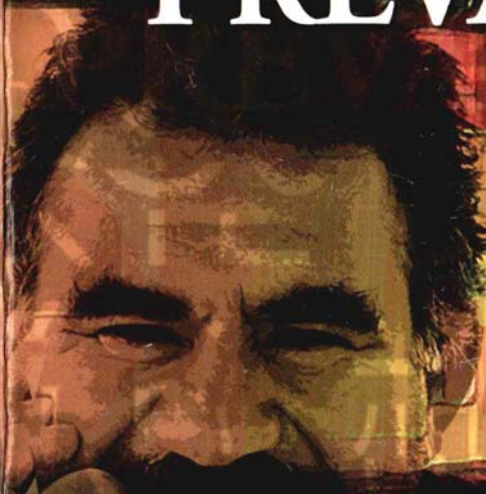


# FREEDOM SHALL PREVAIL



The International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan — Peace in Kurdistan" is a multinational peace initiative for the release of Abdullah Öcalan and a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question. It was established immediately after Öcalan was abducted in Kenya, Nairobi, and handed over to the Republic of Turkey on February 15, 1999, following a clandestine operation by an alliance of secret services. Part of its activity is the publication of Abdullah Öcalan's works.

A Short  
Political  
Biography of

Abdullah Öcalan

## Brochures

War and Peace in Kurdistan (2008)

Democratic Confederalism (2011)

Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution (2013)

Democratic Nation (2016)

All these brochures are compiled predominantly from the translated and untranslated works of Abdullah Öcalan after 1999.

## Other Publications

Building Free Life: Dialogues with Abdullah Öcalan, PM Press (2019)

Freedom Poems for Öcalan, Peace in Kurdistan Campaign (2019)

Art of Freedom, A Brief History of Kurdish Liberation Struggle, PM Press (2021)



More information and translations in other languages:

[www.ocalanbooks.com](http://www.ocalanbooks.com)

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کتابخانه



FREEDOM  
SHALL  
PREVAIL

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## Publications by Abdullah Öcalan

### Books

Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question (1999)

Prison Writings I: The Roots of Civilisation, Pluto Press (2007)

Prison Writings II: The PKK and the Kurdish Question in the 21st Century, Pluto Press (2011)

Prison Writings III: The Road Map to Negotiations, International Initiative Edition (2012)

Civilization: The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings, Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization, Volume I, New Compass Press (2015)

Capitalism: The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings, Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization, Volume II, New Compass Press (2017)

The Political Thought of Abdullah Öcalan, Pluto Press (2017)

Sociology of Freedom , Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization, Volume III), PM Press (2020)

### Upcoming and Untranslated

Beyond State, Power and Violence, PM Press (Spring 2022)

Ortadoğu'da Uyarlık Krizi ve Demokratik Uyarlık Çözümü (Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization, Volume IV) (Turkish 2010)

Kürt Sorunu ve Demokratik Ulus Çözümü (Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization, Volume V) (Turkish 2012)

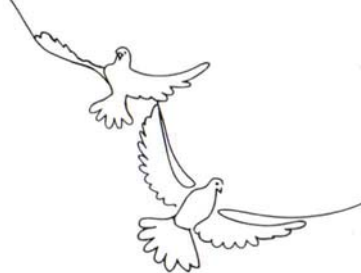
Özgür İnsan Savunması [Defence of the Free Human] (2003)

## On the International Initiative

On 15 February 1999, the President of the Kurdistan Workers Party, Abdullah Öcalan, was handed over to the Republic of Turkey following a clandestine operation backed by an alliance of secret services directed by their corresponding governments. Disgusted by this outrageous violation of international law, several intellectuals and representatives of civil organizations launched an initiative calling for the release of Abdullah Öcalan. With the opening of a central coordination office in March 1999, the International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan – Peace in Kurdistan” started its work.

The International Initiative regards itself as a multinational peace initiative working for a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish question. Even after long years of imprisonment, Abdullah Öcalan is still regarded as an undisputed leader by the majority of the Kurdish people. Hence, the solution of the Kurdish question in Turkey will be closely linked to his fate. As the main architect of the peace process, he is viewed by all sides as key to its successful conclusion, which puts Öcalan’s freedom increasingly firmly on the agenda.

The International Initiative is committed to play its part to this end. It does this through disseminating objective information, lobbying and public relations work, including running campaigns. By publishing translations of Öcalan’s prison writings it hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the origins of the conflicts and the possible solutions.



## Introduction

### Freedom Shall Prevail

Abdullah Öcalan was forced out of Syria on 9 October 1998. He came to Europe in search of a political and peaceful solution to the Kurdish question. Instead, more than twenty-two years ago, on 15 February 1999, in an international clandestine operation, Abdullah Öcalan was kidnapped in Nairobi, Kenya’s capital, and brought to Turkey. Before that, Öcalan was known in Kurdistan, but he and the Kurds were hardly known to the world at large. This changed when Kurds in all four parts of Kurdistan and worldwide took to the streets to protest this clandestine operation and his abduction, raising his profile both internationally and at home.

Despite being sentenced first to death and later to aggravated life imprisonment—without the possibility of parole—Abdullah Öcalan continued to play a major role in shaping the future of the Kurdish Freedom Movement, Kurdistan, and the Middle East at large.

Since 9 October 1998, when Öcalan was forced out of Syria,

much has changed. Although his jailers hoped to remove him from the equation, he continued to hold the ideals that make the PKK what it is—solidarity among peoples and freedom for all—while readying the Kurdish people and those who would heed them for what was to come.

The abduction of Abdullah Öcalan was an early example of what would soon become known as “unlawful renditions” and marked a new string of interventions into Middle East. İmralı Island thus became a precursor of the infamous Guantanamo detention center. In 1999, the Kosovo war ended with NATO collectively attacking a sovereign country for the first time. After the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Bush declared a “War on Terror” in October, invoking Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan, interventions in the Middle East and North Africa continue until today.

Amid continuous bloodbaths and ongoing environmental disaster, the status quo in the Middle East has been gutted and the chaos in the region and throughout the world is consistently deepening. The US and its allies pulled out of Afghanistan, leaving a multitude of misogynist and racist imperial religious structures to unleash fascist rule in the territories under their control. Turkey, among others, is a prominent sponsor and coordination point. The Turkish state has invaded and occupied parts of Iraq and Syria, primarily the Kurdish areas.

Almost nonexistent and little known twenty-five years ago, the Kurds and Abdullah Öcalan are an increasingly recognized force that represents hope around the world. They have not treated

**7** Civilization: The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings, vol. 1; Capitalism: The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings, vol. 2; Sociology of Freedom, vol. 3; The Civilizational Crisis in the Middle East and the Democratic Civilization Solution, vol. 4; The Manifesto of the Kurdistan Revolution: Kurdish Question and the Solution of Democratic Nation, vol. 5. All his books can be found at [ocalanbooks.com](http://ocalanbooks.com).

**8** Mahmut Şakar, “Press Statement by Öcalan’s Lawyers: Öcalan Is Intoxicated,” March 1, 2007, accessed December 15, 2020, <http://www.freeocalan.org/articles/english/press-statement-by-ocalans-lawyers-ocalan-is-intoxicated>; Pascal Kintz, “Statement of Dr. Pascal Kintz on Roj TV about His Analysis of the Öcalan Intoxication Results,” March 1, 2007, accessed December 15, 2020, <http://www.freeocalan.org/articles/english/analysis-of-ocalanintoxication-results-by-dr-kintz>.

**9** For more details, see “Biography,” International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan,” accessed February 7, 2021, <https://freeocalan.org/biography>.

**10** International Initiative, ed., *Building Free Life: Dialogues with Öcalan* (Oakland: PM Press, 2020).

## Notes

1 Kemal Pir, a founding member of the PKK, in 1978, was a revolutionary from the Black Sea region of Turkey and ethnically a Laz. He lost his life on hunger strike in 1982 in the infamous Diyarbakir Military Prison. Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, a Kurdish revolutionary and member of the PKK also lost his life during this hunger strike.

2 The greatest massacre occurred in Maraş, where over one hundred members of the leftist oriented Alevi religious community were murdered by ultra-nationalists in a pogrom that lasted from December 19 to December 26, 1978.

3 In general, these books were informally published abroad and smuggled into Turkey and Kurdistan.

4 Operation Gladio is the codename for clandestine “stay-behind” operations that were organized by the Western Union (WU), and, subsequently, by NATO during the Cold War. All NATO member states built up units that were connected with anti-communist and far-right groups and politicians. In Turkey, these units became extremely influential as counter guerrilla forces. The counter-guerrilla targets various leftist organizations, especially the PKK in Turkey and around Europe.

5 These books were written as submissions to various courts, mainly the European Court of Human Rights, where his case was being discussed.

6 PM Press will publish *Beyond State, Power, and Violence* in 2022.

their captivity at the hands of a number of occupying powers as a source of resentment but, on the contrary, have used it to demonstrate that the only way out of the existing quagmire is solidarity and the freedom of women and of peoples; the freedom of one is simultaneously the freedom of the other. They have dealt a heavy blow to the Dark Ages that ISIS, the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and the Turkish state, among others, hopes to unleash in the Middle East. In the process, they have shown the possibility of a path out of the crisis to another, brighter future based on women's freedom, an ecological economy and a democratic society. Embodied in and primarily known as the revolution in Rojava, they inspire and give hope to millions around the world.

This is why today it is more important than ever to demand freedom for Abdullah Öcalan. For Abdullah Öcalan's continued incarceration has become the symbol of a Middle East drowning in dark times, and his release has become the symbol of freedom, even in a place most unexpected.

This short political biography of Abdullah Öcalan attempts to provide an outline of his life. Even in this brief text you will see time and again that over a period of more than forty years Öcalan, Kurdish women and the people in general have used their words and actions to show that freedom shall prevail. Please join them by raising your voices and join us in our efforts to make freedom prevail both for Kurds and for Abdullah Öcalan.

Cologne, 1 September 2021

International Initiative

“Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan”



# A Short Political Biography of Abdullah Öcalan

Abdullah Öcalan was born on April 4, 1948, in the village of Amara, in the Xelfeti district of Riha (Urfa). He graduated from Ankara Anatolian Land Registry and Cadastre Vocational High School in 1968. In 1970, while working as a civil servant, he enrolled in the Faculty of Law at Istanbul University.

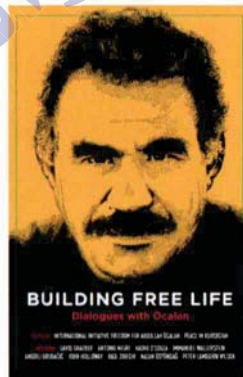


Freedom for Öcalan UK trade union campaign. The campaign was officially endorsed by the UK Trade Union Congress in September 2017, and more than fourteen of the largest trade unions in the UK have affiliated with the campaign.<sup>9</sup>

In early 2019, fifty Nobel laureates called for the end of the solitary confinement of Abdullah Öcalan and of all political prisoners in Turkey.

Meanwhile, leading intellectuals whose work Öcalan follows in spite of the challenges, including Immanuel Wallerstein, Barry K. Gills, Antonio Negri, John Holloway, and David Graeber,

to name but a few, entered into a dialogue with Öcalan's ideas in the book *Building Free Life: Dialogues with Öcalan*, edited by the International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan."<sup>10</sup> While he probably could not access the book, in the last visit that the lawyers were permitted with Öcalan, in 2019, he expressed his gratitude and declared his comradeship with all movements and people in the world who practice and fight for freedom.



As of today, Öcalan and the whole of İmralı Island remain in total isolation, with no possibility of communication whatsoever. Meanwhile, both support for his ideas and the chorus of voices calling for his freedom is growing every day.



On September 6, 2012, a signature campaign began, demanding “freedom for Abdullah Öcalan and the political prisoners in Turkey.” The document states that “Öcalan’s freedom will mark a breakthrough for the democratization of Turkey and peace in Kurdistan.” More than 10.3 million people had signed by 2015.

Over the years, but especially since 2015, Abdullah Öcalan has received much recognition and a number of awards, including honorary citizenship in numerous Italian cities and towns, Palermo and Naples among them. On April 25, 2016, the GMB, a general trade union in the UK, with more than 622 thousand members, and Unite the Union, a British and Irish trade union with more than 1.2 million members, joined forces to launch the



During these years, he met with the Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocağı (Revolutionary Cultural Eastern Hearths; DDKO) and the youth leaders of the 1968 generation about the Kurdish question. He later quit the Faculty of Law and enrolled in the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University. There he led a student strike protesting the March 1972 massacre of the Turkish revolutionary leader Mahir Çayan—whose ideas greatly influenced Öcalan and whom he commemorates to this day—and nine of his comrades in Kızılder. On April 7, 1972, Abdullah Öcalan was imprisoned for seven months for his role in the protests.

Following his release from prison, having failed to introduce the Kurdish problem onto the agenda of Turkish revolutionaries, he started working on establishing a separate group around the idea that “Kurdistan is a colony.” The historically important first meeting of this group took place in 1973, in Ankara. Kemal Pir’s assertion that “the liberation of the Turkish people depends upon the liberation of the Kurdish people” provided the group’s theoretical framework, and, in 1975, Abdullah Öcalan and Mehmet Hayri Durmuş penned the group’s first written document titled “Analyses of Imperialism and Colonialism.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1977, Öcalan and his friends traveled to Kurdistan to engage a campaign to raise awareness of the newly forming group and its ideas. Speeches Öcalan gave during this Kurdistan campaign were transcribed. He visited Bazîd (Elazığ), Qers (Kars),



Digor (Digor), Dersim, Çewlig (Bingöl), Xarpêt (Harput), Amed (Diyarbakır), Mêrdin (Mardin), Riha (Urfa), and Dilok (Antep). Abdullah Öcalan's "The Way of the Kurdistan Revolution," also known as the "Manifesto," was written in the summer of 1978 and published in the first issue of the journal *Serxwebûn* (Independence). Abdullah Öcalan wrote the "Party Program" in memory of Haki Karer, who was from the Black Sea Region and had been murdered in Dilok, and declared the foundation of *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Workers' Party; PKK) at a congress in the village of Fis, in Amed, on November 26–27, 1978. In the wake of the declaration, the Turkish state carried out massacres in Maraş and Meletî (Malatya) and attacks in Semsûr (Adıyaman) and Xarpêt, and then declared martial law and detained numerous people.<sup>2</sup> In 1979, foreseeing a military coup, which would indeed occur in 1980, Abdullah Öcalan and several of his friends passed through the border town Pirsus (Suruç) into the city of Kobani, in Syria.

After leaving Turkey, from 1979 to 1998, Öcalan organized and led the political education of the PKK's rank and file, which



The number of signatures was remarkable considering that the campaign was conducted under immense restrictions—Turkey, Syria, and Iran declared it illegal. Several people were convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison in connection with the campaign.

In 2007, a hunger strike began in Strasbourg, France, to protest the ongoing poisoning of Öcalan, which had been substantiated by a laboratory.<sup>8</sup> A wave of protests quickly spread across Kurdistan, Turkey, and Europe. In a second hunger strike, which began in Strasbourg and Turkey, in 2012, more than seven hundred Kurdish prisoners and many ordinary Kurds all over the world demanded the right to speak their mother tongue and insisted that the Turkish state negotiate with Öcalan. Again, from late 2018 to early 2019, a hunger strike led by imprisoned HDP MP Leyla Güven and joined by thousands of people in prisons and outside of Turkey, demanded that isolation be lifted and Öcalan freed. On June 25, 2012, Kurds began holding a daily vigil in front of the Council of Europe building in Strasbourg that continues to date. They are calling for Öcalan to be freed and are determined to continue the vigil until that goal is achieved.



## Protests and Campaigns

Since Abdullah Öcalan left Syria in 1998 and his subsequent arrest in 1999, there have been countless protests in Kurdistan, in Turkey, and internationally against his abduction, the death penalty, incommunicado detention on İmralı Island, targeted damage to his health, against total isolation, and in support of his political role and his freedom. On several occasions, the isolation could only be broken through protracted widespread hunger strike actions.

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



he considered more important than military training. At the same time, he also led the movement as a whole, conducted foreign relations and was responsible for diplomatic meetings, while doing his best to stay in touch with Kurds and allies in Lebanon, Syria, and, increasingly, around the world. Going back and forth between Syria and Lebanon, where he cooperated with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and met with new and old cadres for the coming struggle, Abdullah Öcalan began making the preparations for a revolutionary people's war against junta set up after the September 12, 1980, coup d'état. During the same period, he published the brochure *United Front of Resistance against Fascism*. In 1981, he wrote the books *The Role of Force in Kurdistan*, *The Question of Personality in Kurdistan*, *Life in the Party and the Characteristics of the Revolutionary Militant*, and *The Problem of National Liberation and the Road Map to its Resolution*, as well as his political report to the party's first conference. In the following two years, he also penned the works *On Organization* (1982) and *On Gallows and the Culture of the Barracks* (1983). The military coup resulted in thousands of people being impris-