

THE İMRALI POST

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

Issue № 44 / 31 March 2023 ★ Contact: imralipost@freeocalan.org

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Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

Asrın Law Office: Precautionary decisions of the UN Human Rights Committee should be implemented

ANF - ISTANBUL - 25 MARCH 2023

Asrın Law Office made a written statement regarding the absence of news from Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan and the other İmralı prisoners, Ömer Hayri Konar, Hamili Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş, for 2 years.

In the statement, Asrın Law Office, said that the last phone call of the Kurdish People's Leader with his brother on 25 March 2021 was cut off within a few minutes, and despite all legal, administrative and democratic initiatives since then, no information has been received from any of the 4 prisoners.

The statement said: "Since we could not visit the prisoners or communicate with them in any way, we have no information about their health, detention conditions and legal status. We have sent 274 applications for lawyer visits and 118 for family visits to Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and İmralı Island Prison Directorate in the past two years. However, we had no answer to any of them. All judicial and administrative applications from the lower to the Constitutional Court against the violation of the prisoners' rights regulated in national and international legislation were also inconclusive. With their decisions, the judicial organs have once again shown that they constitute another pillar of isolation by allowing the isolation in İmralı to continue at a torture and inhumane level, instead of protecting the rights of their clients and putting an end to illegal practices."

The statement added that "The fact that no news has been received from Mr. Öcalan and our other clients cannot be explained by any legal article or law. Being cut off from the world and society, being deprived of legal protection and being kept under uncontrolled, uncertain and unpredictable conditions is an inhuman practice that equals torture. For this reason, an application was made to the United Nations Human Rights Committee with a request for measures to be taken in order to end the state of absolute lack of communication (incommunicado detention) in İmralı. The UN Committee accepted the request for measures as a priority and in September 2022 demanded from the Turkish government an end to the incommunicado detention, and that the applicants be given immediate and unrestricted access to a lawyer of their choice. As it did not comply with this decision, the government was reminded of the urgent request in January 2023. Although the process regarding the merits of the application is still in progress, the injunction decision made it clear that the conditions in İmralı were contrary to the prohibition of torture and that these conditions should be ended immediately.

However, the state, which is bound by international conventions, did not recognize the injunction decision of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, did not take appropriate steps, did not remove the obstacles in front of lawyers and family visits, and continued the state of absolute isolation. The more im-

portant these international decisions regarding the isolation of Öcalan and İmralı are, the more unlawful and political the state's non-compliance with them. The state policies in İmralı affect Turkey and Middle East politics. With security policies implemented instead of peace and democratic politics, polarization, crisis and chaos are produced in every aspect. Of course, this situation is closely related to the Kurdish issue, which has regional and global dimensions, and the decision to leave it unsolved. As the deadlock deepens, so does the state of absolute isolation. As long as the absolute isolation system is maintained, neither the Kurdish question can be resolved nor a democratic development can be achieved.”

The statement added: “In short, the existence of the İmralı isolation means the abandonment of law and democracy in Turkey. This, of course, creates a domino effect that harms the material and spiritual values of society, as well as the whole social and political life.

For a liveable country and geography, the Kurdish issue must be resolved and the İmralı isolation system must be buried in history. Taking the democracy and universal law proposed by Mr. Öcalan as the basic political framework is the only way out of this crisis.

We would like to emphasize again that, despite international decisions, we haven't received no information about health conditions and other detention conditions of our clients for 2 years, and this is a matter of serious concern for us. These concerns should be addressed immediately. The precautionary decisions of the United Nations Human Rights Committee should be implemented immediately and it should be ensured that all the rights of our clients arising from legal and international agreements, especially lawyer visits, are provided. With this awareness and expectation, we invite the democratic public to address this issue with sensitivity.”



Kurds will march to Amara 'for freedom' on Öcalan's birthday

ANF - 27 MARCH 2023

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Co-Chair Berdan Öztürk, Democratic Regions Party (DBP) Co-Chair Saliha Aydeniz, Free Women's Movement (TJA), Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the Families of Prisoners and Convicts-Law and Solidarity Associations Federation (MED TUHAD FED) organized a press conference to address April 4, the birthday of Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. Members of the Lawyers Association for Freedom (ÖHD) and HDP MP Remziye Tosun also attended the press conference held at the MED TUHAD FED office in Amed (Diyarbakır).

‘We do not accept isolation and silence’

The joint statement, read out by MED TUHAD FED Co-Chair Safiye Akdağ, called attention to the aggravated isolation of Öcalan. Akdağ said: “Kurdish leader Mr. Abdullah Öcalan has been kept under heavy isolation in the prison on the island of İmralı for the last 24 years. Despite hundreds of applications submitted by his lawyers and his family to meet him, which remained unanswered, no information could be obtained from him, except a short phone call that was suddenly cut off on March 25, 2020. The European

Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) did not release any information about its last visit to the prison. This practice and silence towards the reactions of the democratic public violate national and international laws as well as all human values.

‘Öcalan offers a democratic solution’

Akdağ continued: “The impact of Mr. Öcalan’s ideas concerning the Kurdish question on the peoples of the Middle East and the world are well-known. In Newroz 2013, millions of people flocked to Newroz where his letter was read out. The darkest period in the history of Turkey and Kurdistan began after the demolition of the negotiation table by the AKP’s Erdogan. Vicious policies, murders, torture, arrests and injustices have targeted the Kurdish people, individuals and democratic institutions in a ruthless and continuous manner.

The Kurdish people and their friends condemned the isolation of Mr. Öcalan in the areas on March 8 and 21 March, Newroz. The Kurds and other peoples flocked to the areas in Kurdistan and all over the world, demanding the freedom of Mr. Öcalan and all the prisoners of freedom, and reiterated that Mr. Öcalan was the main interlocutor for a democratic solution. For the Kurdish people, the peoples of the Middle East and the pro-freedom peoples of the world, Mr. Öcalan's birthday, April 4, has become a symbol of peace against war and freedom against slavery. It has become a symbol of equality against oppression.”

‘We will go to Amara together’

Akdağ noted that every year celebrations and different programs were held on April 4, trees were planted, and marches to Amara were organized. She gave information on this year’s program and said: “This year, we will go to Amara together under the motto 'To Amara for Freedom'. We favour safety, health and freedom of the physical environment, which is the most natural, national and social desire of our Kurds and all pro-freedom peoples. We call on the public to participate in the Amara march for a democratic and peaceful solution to break the isolation. Based on a continuous and effective struggle, we will lift the isolation together and realize the physical freedom of Mr. Öcalan.”

Tree planting and celebrations in various cities

Concerning the April 4 program, Akdağ said: “Tree planting ceremonies and celebrations will take place between April 1-10 in various cities and the march towards Amara will be staged on April 4.”

Speaking after, DBP Co-Chair Saliha Aydeniz said: “April 4 is the birthday of Mr. Öcalan and the Kurdish people. Mr. Öcalan is not an ordinary person for the Kurdish people. He advocates for the Kurdish people's status, equal life, language, culture, self-government in their own land. April 4 is an important date for the Kurdish people. We are going through an important historical period. On the one hand, the isolation has been aggravated gradually, which has turned into an absolute lack of communication, especially in the last two years. On the other hand, as the isolation has deepened, war and hostility against the Kurds have escalated. We are welcoming April 4 at a time when the politics that insist on war, isolation and hostility to peoples has come to a deadlock and become self-destructive.”

‘We call on all our people’

Aydeniz continued: “We have made it very clear that we do not accept isolation. We call on all our people to participate in the celebration on April 4 this year. Mr. Öcalan’s perspective on a democratic solution is very clear. His suggestion for an alternative life is very clear and gives hope to people. Mr. Öcalan’s physical freedom must be ensured immediately so that he can play his historical role for a solution to the Kurdish question, for the democratization of Turkey and the Middle East. We urge all our people to march to Amara for the rebirth of Mr. Öcalan and the Kurdish people. We call for freedom and democracy to be rebuilt together there.”

‘Kurds’ birthday’

DTK Co-Chair Berdan Öztürk pointed out that the Kurds have been ignored for years. Öztürk said: “This understanding still prevails. Why is Mr. Öcalan so important to us? Ahead of us is a historic election. Everyone should know that Mr. Öcalan, with his philosophy and paradigm, is not only a leader of the Kurds, but also a leader of the Middle East. That’s why he is so important to us. He is the leader of the Kurds and the oppressed peoples. His birthday is the birthday of the Kurds. Nobody can deny this. In the past, the Kurds were ashamed to reveal that ‘they were Kurds’. They were not considered human beings. Mr. Öcalan and his companions opposed and struggled against it. Everyone is aware of the role and mission of Mr. Öcalan. Everyone knows very well that the Kurdish question cannot be resolved without Öcalan. Democracy cannot be obtained without Öcalan.

Mr. Öcalan’s birthday signifies the rebirth of the Kurdish people. The Kurdish people have been reborn, and the Kurds are now known all over the world thanks to the paradigm of Mr. Öcalan. We will march to Amara together and deliver a strong message there. There can be no solution, democracy, freedom and equal life without Öcalan.”



International Delegation Against Isolation presents new report

ANF - 27 MARCH 2023

The ongoing isolation of Kurdish people’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan is mobilizing international organizations. The International Delegation Against Isolation was in Ankara, Istanbul and Diyarbakir to hold a series of meetings with various people on 24-29 January. The delegation made up of 36 lawyers, politicians, academics and activists from 7 countries in Europe and South Africa examined both the isolation issue and the conditions of fascism created by the AKP-MHP government.

Based on its talks with political parties, bar associations and non-governmental organizations, the International Delegation Against Isolation today presented its report which highlights the role of Abdullah Öcalan for a solution to the Kurdish question and democratization.

The report “Solitary Confinement and Isolation Policies in Turkey” was presented by two members of the delegation, Avukat Altamira Ana Guelbenzu Gonzalo and Sophie Jane Caseley, in an online meeting on Monday.

Highlights from the International Delegation Against Isolation are as follows:

“On 25 March 2023, it will have been two years since the outside world last heard any sign of life from Abdullah Öcalan. Since his arrest and subsequent conviction in 1999, the Kurdish leader has been imprisoned in the F-Type High-Security Prison on İmralı Island. Together with three fellow inmates, Ömer Hayri Konar, Hamili Yıldırım, and Veysi Aktaş, he remains subject to a detention regime of strict isolation. All four prisoners are barred from any communication with their families as well as with their lawyers. Such type of incommunicado imprisonment violates international human rights instruments and standards.

In what would constitute a worrying trend, the İmralı detention regime has reportedly become an example for other prisons across Turkey since the breakdown of the PKK- Turkish peace process in 2015. The alleged isolation of prisoners would thus constitute a facet of the wider escalation between the Turkish authorities and the Kurdish movement.

The lack of an effective remedy - both domestically (due to the lack of independence of the judiciary) as well as internationally - was a recurrent theme. For example, the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe following the European Court of Human Rights judgments have been repeatedly ignored, as set out within Asrin Law Office’s most recent report.

The approach to İmralı Prison and the legal and political practices in the prison is a litmus test of democracy and protection of human rights in Turkey. We once again call on those in positions of responsibility in Turkey to urgently restore the rule of law in İmralı Prison. It is therefore imperative to perceive this state of affairs not only as a legal, but also as a political problem.

The discriminatory execution regime against political prisoners, which was first implemented in İmralı Island Prison and gradually spread to all prisons in Turkey, must be abolished. Respect for the basic human rights of all prisoners must be reestablished as the norm and not as an exception. The system created on İmralı Island is being deployed as a political tool. It no longer constitutes an exception but has evolved into an ordinary legal- political regime that has spread throughout the country. Isolation is implemented throughout society and is not only confined to prisons.

The regime of isolation affects not only Abdullah Öcalan and political prisoners in Turkey, but the entire social opposition. The order of repression and exploitation based on a society subjected to these levels of political repression encroaches on social life in its totality. This finds expression in the severe oppression and repression of those who dissent and oppose the policies and actions of the government and the Turkish state, by arrests and detention, arbitrary court procedures, convictions, and imposing direct and long terms of imprisonment, of such people. Its worst expression is in the form of isolation, i.e. total isolation of those political dissenters and opposition groups/parties and their leaders who are languishing in prison.

The Kurdish issue and concomitant problems such as poverty, hunger, migration, and refugees, gender-based inequalities and violence, cultural erosion, and environmental destruction caused by the war cannot

be resolved without building a proper answer to all the said problems and mainly without bringing to an end to the ending the incommunicado detention and the systematic violation of the prohibition of torture in İmralı Prison. This encirclement can only be overcome through only a joint legal, political and social struggle at every level.

Due to its significance and ramifications, the Kurdish issue has grown into a problem on a regional and global scale. Efforts geared towards its solution should therefore also be discussed by taking into account its impact and consequences for the Middle East and the world at large. For this, it is essential for all progressive forces around the world to take the initiative and mobilise.

Last but as important as the rest of the conclusions, we cannot stress enough how concerned the members of the Delegation are by the persecution of lawyers by the Turkish state, simply for doing their job.

It is alarming that the lawyers and human rights defenders who carry out legal activities to assist the prisoners in İmralı Prison, where all rights are suspended, are prevented from doing their work and subjected to investigations and prosecutions. This itself is an indication of how much the field of law and human rights has come under attack, both as a profession and as a normative framework.

Lawyers are fundamental to the rule of law and if they are persecuted, the accused cannot have a fair trial or equality before the law. Furthermore, detainees must have the fundamental right to access lawyers without hindrance and to safeguard the legal privilege and confidentiality of their communications. States also have a duty to respect the fundamental role of lawyers in guaranteeing the right to a fair trial and a just execution of lawful punishment, and not to act in violation of the rights and specific prerogatives that every state under the rule of law must guarantee to lawyers, as specified by UN Basic Principles 8 and 16 on the role of lawyers. The fundamental issue underlining all of this is the lack of independence of the judiciary, as emphasized by the ABA.

The solution to all these problems lies in the democratic and societal solution to the Kurdish issue. The main purpose of isolation practices is to suppress the legitimate democratic struggle and the cohesion of the social opposition. Öcalan's freedom is inevitable for a peaceful and political solution to the Kurdish issue and the democratisation of Turkey. Therefore, the primary and essential objective of all oppositional forces and law and human rights defenders must be the complete abolition of the extra-legal İmralı system.

There is an urgent need for the international community-via bar associations and other lawyers' associations to take note of the worsening situation in Turkey and the erosion of the rule of law. The prevailing conditions in Turkey are similar to a permanent and sustained state of emergency. This unlawful state of affairs must be ended immediately.

In light of the continued non-publication of the CPT's report, we remain deeply concerned about the fact that the harmful policies applied in İmralı and other high-security prisons continue with no checks and balances.

Given Turkey's failure to follow previous recommendations of the CPT, we urge the CPT to make use of Article 10 (2) of the Convention to publish a statement setting out a summary of their findings, particularly in relation to the prisoners at İmralı, even before the publication of their report. We urge the govern-

ment of Turkey to implement the recommendations made by the CPT in their last report and also ask the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe to discuss the next steps, particularly given Turkey's past failure to comply with CPT recommendations.

We call on the Turkish state to implement without delay the previous recommendations of the CPT and European Court of Human Rights (Ocalan No 2). This will include allowing prisoners to associate, the right of access to lawyers and family, effective legal remedies to challenge prison conditions, and abolishing the aggravated life sentence which contravenes Article 3 ECHR. Solitary confinement cannot be indefinite with no supervisory mechanism.”

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Women in Maxmur continue action demanding freedom for Öcalan

ANF - MAXMUR - 28 MARCH 2023

The tent action launched in the Martyr Rustem Cudi Refugee Camp in Maxmur on 11 March to demand freedom of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan continues. The action has been promoted by the Maxmur Young Women's Movement (TJCM).

During the action, a video about the life and struggle of Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan was screened.

The tent action will continue until 4 April, Öcalan's birthday.

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Activists from St Gallen take over Freedom for Öcalan Vigil in Strasbourg

ANF - STRASBOURG - 28 MARCH 2023

The Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Vigil in Strasbourg is on its 562nd week. This week the vigil has been taken over by four Kurdish activists from St Gallen.

Abidin Yılmaz, Kadir Demirağaç, Selman Demirtok and İbrahim Poyraz will inform the public about the isolation conditions imposed on Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan and the struggle of the Kurdish people.



Sociology of Freedom available in Italian

ANF - 29 MARCH 2023

The Sociology of Freedom (Sociologia della Libertà) by Abdullah Öcalan is now available in Italian. The book is published by Punto Rosso in collaboration with the International Initiative - Freedom for Öcalan.

The book is a truly monumental work that gives profuse evidence of Abdullah Öcalan's position as one of the most influential thinkers of our day.

The book is Volume III of the Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization.

The book has a foreword by John Holloway.

The Sociology of Freedom is the fascinating third volume of a five-volume work titled *The Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization*. The general aim of the two earlier volumes was to clarify what power and capitalist modernity entailed. Here, Öcalan presents his stunningly original thesis of the democratic civilization, based on his criticism of capitalist modernity.

When scientific socialism, which for many years was implemented by Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), became too narrow for his purposes, Öcalan deftly answered the call for a radical redefinition of the social sciences. Writing from his solitary cell in İmralı Prison, Öcalan offered a new and astute analysis of what is happening to the Kurdish people, the Kurdish freedom movement, and future prospects for humanity.

Ambitious in scope and encyclopaedic in execution, *The Sociology of Freedom* is a one-of-a-kind exploration that reveals the remarkable range of one of the Left's most original thinkers with topics such as existence and freedom, nature and philosophy, anarchism and ecology. Öcalan goes back to the origins of human culture to present a penetrating reinterpretation of the basic problems facing the twenty-first century and an examination of their solutions. Öcalan convincingly argues that industrialism, capitalism, and the nation-state cannot be conquered within the narrow confines of a socialist context.

Recognizing the need for more than just a critique, Öcalan has advanced what is the most radical, far-reaching definition of democracy today and argues that a democratic civilization, as an alternative system, already exists but systemic power and knowledge structures, along with a perverse sectarianism, do not allow it to be seen.



PJAK Co-Chair Vejin: Öcalan's birth is our birth

ANF - 29 MARCH 2023

The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), which was founded on April 4, the birthday of Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, celebrates its 19th anniversary. PJAK Co-Chair Zilan Vejin spoke to ANF about the Kurdish leader's birthday and the establishment of her party.

Vejin said: "Our party came into existence due to a social need and political vacuum in Rojhilat (East Kurdistan) and Iran. The Kurdish society, and especially its youth, were in search of a new breakthrough". Vejin remarked that the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979 no longer met the people's demands for freedom and democracy. "The struggle against the state, which imposed sharia law on society, was not organized and a common struggle was essential."

Rojhilat was enlightened by Öcalan's ideas

Vejin stated that the birth of Öcalan was a great chance for the communities in Kurdistan. She continued: "The fact that our party PJAK was founded on April 4 makes our struggle even more meaningful. Before the establishment of the PJAK, Rojhilat was aware of Öcalan's ideas and philosophy. Rojhilat was enlightened by his ideas. The Rojhilat society, and especially its women, rallied around Öcalan's ideas in order to achieve democracy and freedom. Just as the birth of Öcalan is the birth of Kurdish society, the birth of the PJAK means the birth of Rojhilat."

"When a party or organization engages in a struggle, it must first have a democratic mentality and system. The PJAK, which was established on April 4 in accordance with the ideas and philosophy of Öcalan, has now become a great hope in the struggle for democracy and freedom in Rojhilat and Iran."

April 4 raises hope for victory

Vejin emphasized that April 4 has a great meaning for the rebirth of the Kurdish people and humanity. She added: "April 4 raises hopes for victory. It signifies liberation from the capitalist system that enslaves all members of society, and an awakening day of all oppressed societies. The birth of Öcalan also signifies the birth of a new ideology, idea and philosophy for the Kurdish people. Öcalan's philosophy is based on the freedom of society, its moral values and its political and conscientious revolution."

Vejin stressed that significant changes took place within Kurdish society following the establishment of the PJAK. "Due to the lack of an alternative and a democratic mentality, the society has been subjected to social, cultural, spiritual and physical genocide for 44 years. Thanks to the struggle, there have been major social changes. The 'Jin, jiyana, azadi' (Woman, Life, Freedom) revolution represents this reality."

We base on women's freedom

Drawing attention to the role played by women within the PJAK, Vejin said: "The freedom of women, who are the pioneers of society, is essential for the PJAK, because women should be free first for the freedom of society. As Öcalan said, women's liberation comes before the liberation of the nation and country."

This means that if women are servile, freedom and patriotism would have no meaning. Women's presence and leadership within the PJAK strengthen our revolutionary will and raise the level of consciousness and freedom.”

If the regime doesn't change, Iran will risk falling

The PJAK Co-Chair also addressed the recent developments in East Kurdistan and Iran, stating, “We consider the current period in Rojhilat and Iran as an interim period. Iran needs political, legal and administrative changes. If the regime does not change, Iran will risk falling, because the existing system can no longer survive. In the meantime, there are historic opportunities ahead of Iran.”

Vejin pointed out that if Iran chooses democratic politics and renewal, it will play an important role in the Middle East. “However, if it does the opposite, it will collapse after a struggle carried out by the peoples, women and youth against torture, execution and massacres. Because no power can defy society's demands.”

Vejin emphasized that East Kurdistan is currently leading the struggle of the Iranian peoples for the establishment of a democratic and free life. She concluded: “This revolution has started under the leadership of Kurdish women. Therefore, the peoples of Iran and Rojhilat have a historic responsibility. The victory of the ‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadi’ revolution depends on the struggle of the peoples.”

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Prisons in Turkey

Peace Mother Hanse Bulut to remain in prison because she showed no “remorse”

ANF - IZMIR - 26 MARCH 2023

Peace Mother Hanse (Xense) Bulut (66), who is in İzmir Şakran Women's Closed Prison, will remain in jail for an extra 3 months for not showing “remorse”. Three days before her release, Bulut received the news that she would remain in prison because she did not show any “remorse”.

Bulut told the news to her children in a phone call. Her son Abdullah Bulut said: “With what right does a 66-year-old woman remain in prison even though she has served her sentence? This is neither humanity nor conscience. Who will be held accountable if an old and sick woman dies in prison? My mother suffers from hypertension and diabetes. We want her to be released immediately.”

Peace Mother Hanse (Xense) Bulut, who lives in the Çimentepe, in Konak (province of Izmir), was detained and arrested on 10 September 2021. Bulut was arrested after her 2-year prison sentence was upheld

in the lawsuit filed against her for allegedly “aiding a terrorist organization” because she did not leave her house during the curfews declared in the Nusaybin district of Mardin in 2015.

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Birdal: The government is taking revenge on ill prisoners

ANF - ANKARA - 26 MARCH 2023

According to the latest data from the Human Rights Association (IHD), there are 1,517 ill prisoners in jails, 651 of whom are seriously ill.

Following the death of former Lieutenant General Vural Avar, who was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment in the “28 February trial”, a circular was signed by Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdağ on 3 January 2023. The circular, titled “Proceedings on the Mitigation or Removal of Sentences of Persons Due to Persistent Illness, Injury and Husband”, regulated the President's power of pardon. However, while 5 soldiers on trial in the “February 28 Trial” were released after the circular, the lack of any action against political prisoners drew criticism.

Birdal stated that prisons have been turned into “death houses” by destroying human dignity and said: “While the February 28 coup plotters were released, ill prisoner Mehmet Emin Özkan continues to be kept in prison with many other ill prisoners. This discrimination policy in prisons will have irreversible consequences.”

This discrimination in prisons can only be eliminated after the elections, Birdal said, adding: “Today, there are 349 thousand detainees in prisons. 40,000 of them are prisoners who committed war crimes against human dignity and peace. A general amnesty is needed for the detainees other than these, if social peace is desired. We hope that a government that will release prisoners will come to power.”

Speaking about the decisions made by the Forensic Medicine Institute (ATK) over ill detainees, Birdal said that ATK has transformed from a medical institution into a political institution. Birdal noted that the “ATK has been shaped according to the program of this government. They are trying to take revenge on prisoners because of their opposition to the central power.”

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Journalists who served their sentence denied release for not showing “remorse”

ANF - 28 MARCH 2023

Political prisoners in Turkey are pressured to make confessions of remorse after serving their regular prison terms. Those who refuse remain behind bars. Prisoners have long been subjected to increased pressure to make confessions under the “repentance law.”

Journalist Dilan Oynaş has been imprisoned in Ankara Sincan Women’s Closed Prison since 2016 on charges of “membership in a terrorist organization”. She continues to stay in prison by a decision of the Prison Monitoring Board, even though her “sentence” was completed on April 26, 2022. Her release has been suspended for the fourth time.

The Prison Monitoring Board did not release Oynaş on April 27, 2022, on the pretext that she did not have “good conduct”. On July 21, 2022, the imprisonment of Oynaş was extended for another 6 months since she rejected the “repentance law”. The Prison Monitoring Board convened on January 21 and denied her release for the third time, citing a disciplinary punishment against Oynaş.

The Prison Monitoring Board convened for the fourth time yesterday (March 27) and once again suspended the release of Oynaş for another 6 months since she insisted on rejecting the “repentance law”.

The Board will meet on April 29 and decide on the case of the journalist.

In the meantime, the release of another journalist, Abdulkadir Turay, who is jailed in Erzincan L Type Prison, has also been suspended for another 3 months on the grounds that he rejected the repentance law.

Journalist Turay has been in prison since 2016. Turay’s case was reviewed by the Prison Monitoring Board as his release date approached.

While the Board forced Turay to show remorse, Turay replied: “I have been in prison for many years. I have no regrets”. The Board suspended Turay’s release for another 3 months.

Turay was arrested while working as a correspondent for the Dicle News Agency (DİHA), which was later closed down by a governmental decree (KHK), in the Savur district of Mardin. Turay was sentenced to 9 years in prison for allegedly “being a member of a terrorist organization” by the Mardin 2nd High Criminal Court.

Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office completes indictment against 20 journalists

ANF - AMED - 29 MARCH 2023

The Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has completed its investigation against 22 people, 20 of them journalists, who were arrested on 16 June 2022. Four of the people were released.

The Diyarbakır Public Prosecutor completed its investigation after 9 months and 10 days. The 20 journalists, a cook and an interviewee, were remanded in custody with the allegation of "being a member of a terrorist organization".

The Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office sent the indictment it prepared to the Diyarbakır 4th High Criminal Court. After examining the indictment, the court will decide within 15 days whether it accepts it or not. If the indictment is accepted, the trial will begin.

Journalists in prison

The journalists detained in house and workplace raids on 16 June 2022 are Dicle Fırat Journalists Association (DFG) co-chair Serdar Altan, Mesopotamia Agency (MA) editor Aziz Oruç, Xwebûn Newspaper editor-in-chief Mehmet Ali Ertaş, JINNEWS editor-in-chief Safiye Alağaç and journalists Zeynel Abidin Bulut, Ömer Çelik, Mazlum Doğan Güler, İbrahim Koyuncu, Neşe Toprak, Elif Üngür, Abdurrahman Öncü, Suat Doğanhan, Remziye Temel, Ramazan Geciken, Lezgin Akdeniz and Mehmet Şahin.

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Mother of seriously ill prisoner Ekim Polat says her son needs urgent treatment

ANF - ISTANBUL - 30 MARCH 2023

The Human Rights Association (IHD) Istanbul Branch Prison Commission held a press conference at the association building to expose the situation of Ekim Polat, a young seriously ill prisoner currently in Denizli T Type jail, and to demand his immediate treatment. Songül İlker, Ekim's mother, who started a sit-in in front of Denizli T Type Prison to voice the demands of her son, spoke at the meeting.

Ilker said that during his stay in prison, her son Ekim Polat developed acromegaly, popularly known as Gigantism, and added that " the Forensic Medicine Institute (ATK) is not giving proper attention to this disease. My son's organs have been damaged due to this illness. Even though he has difficulties meeting his daily needs, he is denied access to health and treatment."

In addition, said İlker, “Ekim is constantly subjected to threats by the prison administration. The director of the prison told me on several occasions that he would go out dead from prison.”

Ilker said that her son should undergo surgery and added: “He has been writing a petition requesting to be sent to Istanbul for treatment for 3 weeks, but this petition has gone unanswered. I don’t want my son to come out in a coffin from prison. I want him to be brought to hospital for treatment.”

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Guards beat women prisoners in Kayseri Bünyan Women's Closed jail

ANF - KAYSERI - 31 MARCH 2023

Torture, beating and ill-treatment of political prisoners continue in Turkish prisons.

The last incident exposed took place in the Kayseri Bünyan Women’s Closed Prison, where 30 guards raided the wards and beat up female political prisoners, including ill prisoner Nazlı Solgun.

Among the battered prisoners is Nazlı Solgun, who was found to have an enlarged heart valve and a nodule in her brain.

According to the information given by their families, the prisoners are systematically tortured in Bünyan Women’s Prison.

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Military aggression and occupation

HPG: Turkish attacks on guerrilla areas continue

ANF - BEHDINAN

The Press Centre of the People’s Defence Forces (HPG) released a statements providing information about the recent attacks by the Turkish army in the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

25 March 2023: According to the statement, the invading army continued its attacks on guerrilla areas on March 24 and 25.

The Turkish army carried out two attacks on the guerrilla positions in Sida in the Zap region on March 24. Guerrillas responded to the attack to defend themselves.

On March 24, Turkish fighter jets carried out 12 strikes on the areas of Golka, Girê Bahar, Girê Amediyê and Girê Cûdî in Metina, as well as the vicinity of the Sêgirê village in Amadiya.

On the same day, Turkish attack helicopters carried out 14 strikes on the areas of Girê Cûdî, Girê FM, Kurojahro and Saca, and the guerrilla positions in Çemço.

The guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sida were targeted by 16 attacks with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons on March 24 and 25.

26 March 2023: According to the statement, the invading army carried out 59 attacks on guerrilla areas on March 24 and 25.

The area of Girê Çarçêl and the vicinity of the Şêlazê village in Metina were bombed twice by Turkish fighter jets on March 24.

On March 25, the Girê Cûdî Resistance Area, Girê Şehîd Kamuran and the vicinity of the Lolan river, as well as the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sida were targeted by 57 attacks with helicopters, howitzers, mortars, tanks and heavy weapons.

27 March 2023: According to the statement, the invading army carried out 28 attacks on guerrilla areas on March 26.

The area of Girê Ortê in Metina was shelled by Turkish fighter jets three times.

The areas of Girê Ortê, Girê FM and the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sida were attacked with howitzers and heavy weapons 25 times.

28 March 2023: HPG reported that the guerrilla positions in the area of Sida in Zap region were attacked twice, facing a response from the guerrillas in an act of self-defence.

The Girê FM Resistance Area and the guerrilla positions Çemço and Sida were targeted by 17 attacks with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons.

29 March 2023: According to the statement, the Turkish army continues its attacks on guerrilla positions although the guerrillas have been in a defensive position for humanitarian reasons since the severe earthquake in the Turkish-Syrian border region on 6 February.

HPG reported that the Turkish invading forces used prohibited weapons against a guerrilla position in the Sida area on 28 March. The position is located near the village of the same name in the Zap region and is attacked daily by the army. Sida and nearby Çemço have been of strategic importance since the occupation forces withdrew from large parts of the Zap region in December. Because the Turkish army has had no successes in the Zap, it is trying to capture areas in the Avaşîn region further east. To do so, it seeks to break the guerrilla resistance in Çemço and Sida.

According to the HPG statement, the areas of Girê Cûdî and Girê Çarçêl in Metîna and Geliyê Balinda in Zap were bombed by fighter jets a total of four times on 27 and 28 March.

On the other hand, the Turkish army carried out a total of 15 attacks with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons against the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sîda as well as against the Girê Cûdî and Girê FM resistance areas on 28 and 29 March.

30 March 2023: “Despite the fact that our forces are in a position of inaction, the Turkish army carries out uninterrupted attacks and operations in several locations across North Kurdistan. Likewise, the Medya Defense Zones (guerrilla-held areas in southern Kurdistan/northern Iraq) are targeted by nonstop bombardments from the air and land and our battle tunnels are attacked with prohibited weapons. As the AKP-MHP regime relies on war for its future and insists on war, it escalates its attacks,” said the HPG statement on Thursday.

According to the statement, the guerrilla areas in Metina were attacked on March 27, to which the guerrillas responded with heavy weapons to defend themselves.

On March 29, the guerrilla positions in Sida were bombed twice with banned weapons.

On March 27, the area of Golka in Metina was bombed twice by fighter jets.

On March 29, the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sida were targeted by 19 attacks with howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons.

On the other hand, HPG reported that an unarmed guerrilla fighter, Harun (Selim Adıyaman), was captured by “a group of traitors” and handed over to the Turkish army. “These are lowlifes who insulted a freedom guerrilla and handed him over to the Turkish state will be brought to account in the strongest way. Our people should take a stand against such traitors and condemn them,” HPG stated.

31 March 2023: HPG reported that the guerrilla positions in Sida twice with banned weapons on March 30.

On March 28, the area of Serê Metîna in Metina was bombed by fighter jets.

On March 30 and 31, the Girê FM and Girê Cûdî areas, the vicinity of the Lolan River in Xakurke, the areas of Girê Şehîd Kamuran and Girê Şehîd Heqî and the guerrilla positions in Çemço and Sîda were targeted by 96 attacks with helicopters, mortars, howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons.

Çemço and Sida belong to the Sheladize sub-district near the town of Amadiya in Duhok governorate and have been the focus of the occupation forces since the partial withdrawal of the Turkish army from the Zap region at the end of last year.

Turkey's attacks continue despite a ceasefire announced by the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK). The decision was taken after the devastating earthquake disaster in the Turkish-Syrian border area on 6 February. The Kurdish guerrillas, which include the HPG and the YJA Star (Free Women's Troops), are implementing the call for a cessation of all hostilities and are in a defensive position.

In a statement on February 9, the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), an umbrella organization of the Kurdish freedom movement of which the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) is also a member, called for a halt of military actions in Turkey, in metropolises and cities. “It is necessary to prevent the people from experiencing even more suffering in this affliction”, said Cemil Bayık, co-chairman of the executive council of the KCK.

The Central Headquarters of the People’s Defence Forces (HSM) expressed support for the KCK’s call and said on February 11 that the guerrillas were ready to do their part to alleviate the suffering of people.

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AANES delegation visits French Senate

ANF - 25 MARCH 2023

A delegation from the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) paid a visit to the French Senate on Friday.

The AANES delegation was made up of Bedran Çiya Kurd, co-chair of the Autonomous Administration Foreign Relations Department; Abdulkерim Omer, the Autonomous Administration Europe Representative; YPJ (Women’s Defense Units) Spokeswoman Rûksan Mihemed; YPG (People’s Defense Units) Spokesman Nuri Mahmoud and Autonomous Administration France Representative Xalid Isa.

According to the statement published on the website of AANES, the delegation met with Senator Pierre Laurent in the Senate building in the French capital, Paris.

The meeting dealt with the general situation in NE Syria, and the most prominent challenges after 12 years of the crisis, without any prospects for a political solution, as well as the political, economic, humanitarian and security challenges faced by the Autonomous Administration, and the Turkish threats and attacks that destabilize the region.

The two sides discussed the crimes committed in the occupied areas, including killings, arrests, and demographic changes by mercenaries allied with Turkey, in addition to the killing of four people while celebrating Newroz in Jindires district of Afrin. It was emphasized that France and the international community should assume its responsibilities towards these issues.

For his part, Pierre Laurent affirmed their appreciation for the sacrifices made by the people of North-East Syria against ISIS mercenaries, and offered condolences to the victims of the earthquake and Jindires massacre.

Laurent reaffirmed their support for the Autonomous Administration and the need to strengthen and develop cooperation between the Autonomous Administration and France to confront terrorism and to achieve a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis in Syria.



Six villages in Cizre under military siege

ANF - 27 MARCH 2023

According to the information received, the villages of Cinibrê (Yeşilyurt), Nehirbê (Sulak), Biyakopkê (Lower Çeşme), Batilê (Tepeönü), Sirsirkê (Çağıl), Gozik (Gürsu) have been under siege for 10 days.

This military decision was justified with a “denouncement” received. While the entrances and exits of the villages are strictly controlled, the people passing by are subjected to the General Information Scan (GBT).

According to Mezopotamya news agency, a villager who did not want to be named for security reasons said that everyone was scared because of the siege.

The person said: “No one can go out after dark. Since it is the month of Ramadan, people usually go out after iftar. But because of the siege, no one can leave. We are in a difficult situation. In the first raids, the soldiers broke the doors and windows of many houses and threatened families. The soldiers said that they would remain in the villages for a while in line with the orders they received from the authorities. That's why we don't know when the blockade will lift.”



Political parties in Raqqa call for action to stop Turkish occupation and crimes

ANF - RAQQA - 27 MARCH 2023

The Al-Sharqiya group affiliated with the Syrian National Army opened fire on a group of Kurdish locals who wanted to light a Newroz fire in Afrin's Jindires district, claiming the lives of 4 citizens and injuring some others on the night of March 20.

The Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Kurdistan Brotherhood Party and the Conservative Party came together in Muhafeza Square in the south of Raqqa and made a statement concerning the Jindires massacre. The press statement was read out by Cumane El Xelef, a member of the Kurdistan Brotherhood Party.

The statement raised concern over the crimes committed by the invading Turkish state and its mercenaries against Afrin's Kurds for more than 5 years. It said that the Newroz fire revealed the true face of those who claim to have liberated Afrin, and their grudge against its original residents.

The statement pointed out that the Jindires massacre showed what was really going on in the regions occupied by the Turkish state and its mercenaries. It noted that the invading Syrian Coalition and the Turkish state were responsible for this massacre.

The political parties called on international forces, the UN Security Council, the USA and Russia to take immediate action to liberate Afrin, Serêkaniyê, Girê Spî and other occupied regions in northern Syria from the Turkish invasion.

The parties demanded that members of the “national army” affiliated with the opposition be declared “terrorists”.

The statement called for support for the legitimate demands of the people of Afrin and expansion of the struggle.



Besê Hozat says KCK to extend unilateral ceasefire until after the elections

ANF - 28 MARCH 2023

KCK Executive Council co-chair Besê Hozat announced that the unilateral ceasefire would remain in place until after the elections.

Speaking to Medya Haber TV, Hozat said: “We have decided to stop the military actions until the election is over.”

The KCK had taken a decision to stop military actions (except for the right to defend themselves) after the Maraş-centered earthquakes. However, despite the decision of “inaction” taken by the KCK, Turkey continued to carry out attacks in South Kurdistan many times.



Two ISIS suicide bombers killed in Heseke

ANF - 31 MARCH 2023

According to reports from the ground, two ISIS suicide bombers attempted to infiltrate a security point of the Internal Security Forces (Asayish) in the Nashwa neighborhood of Heseke at 14:20 local time this afternoon.

The suicide bombers were noticed by the Internal Security Forces and killed before they reached the security point.

In a recent interview with ANF, Newroz Ehmed, one of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) General Commanders, pointed to the ongoing ISIS threat in North-East Syria after the SDF liberated Baghouz, the last stronghold of ISIS, in 2019.

Newroz Ehmed stated that 285 cells were smashed and 2323 ISIS members were arrested after Baghouz victory.

“The ‘caliphate state’ came to an end following the Baghouz victory. However, as we said before, ISIS ideology prevails. In the past years, large scale operations have been carried out against the sleeper cells and the areas where they have an influence. In some places, ISIS attacks were prevented. The danger is not over, ISIS’ presence in the region and its attempts to reorganize and the attacks by ISIS prisoners and their families still continue. Great struggles are being carried out for the control of these regions. The joint struggle by the SDF and the Internal Security Forces continues under the leadership of our intelligence forces,” Ehmed said.

According to Ehmed, dozens of operations were carried out in many regions including the Hol Camp, Til Berak, Til Hemîs, Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Tabqa, Sirîn, where ISIS reorganized itself. “Especially after the attacks on Serêkaniyê and Girê Spî, ISIS mercenaries carried out several major attacks in the region, including on Heseke’s Sinaa and Raqqa prisons. During this period, there were 352 terrorist attacks by ISIS. As a result of the operations carried out with the International Coalition and Internal Security Forces, 2323 ISIS members who organized attacks and helped mercenary groups were captured, 397 of whom were dead. The interrogation of the arrested ISIS members is still ongoing.”

In a statement marking the fourth anniversary of the elimination of ISIS in Baghouz, SDF stated that: “The terrorist organization continues to pose an imminent threat to our regions and the world, primarily through its network of terrorist cells. Its objective is to rebuild its crumbling organization, revive its aspirations, regain control over certain territories, and threaten the lives of the local population. Recent attacks launched by these cells on Al-Hol camp, the city of Raqqa, and the al-Sina’a prison in al-Hasaka city underscore the continuing danger it poses.”



The Command of Military Academies launches new military course

ANF - 31 MARCH 2023

The Command of Military Academies in the eastern region launched a new training course for 60 fighters of the Deir ez-Zor Military Council. The new course is named after the martyr “Bassam Ghassan Al-

Muhammad” and will span three months. The fighters will receive ideological and political lectures and military training on light and medium weapons.

Leaders from the Deir ez-Zor Military Council attended the opening ceremony, which commenced with a minute of silence in honor of the martyrs, followed by a military parade by the fighters of the Deir ez-Zor Military Council. In her speech, Lilawa Al-Abdullah, the co-leader of the Deir ez-Zor Military Council, praised the fighters’ high morale and emphasized the importance of the course in enhancing their readiness to defend the area against any potential attacks.

The opening ceremony concluded with the fighters performing the military oath.



Kurdish mothers call for an end to Turkish attacks after KCK’s halt of military actions

ANF - 31 MARCH 2023

Despite an inaction announced by the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), Turkey continues its attacks against the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). The KCK’s decision was taken after the devastating earthquake disaster in the Turkish-Syrian border area on 6 February. The Kurdish guerrillas, which include the HPG and the YJA Star (Free Women’s Troops), are implementing the call for a cessation of all hostilities and are in a defensive position.

In a statement on February 9, the KCK, an umbrella organization of the Kurdish freedom movement of which the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) is also a member, called for a halt of military actions in Turkey, in metropolises and cities. “It is necessary to prevent the people from experiencing even more suffering in this affliction”, said Cemil Bayık, co-chairman of the executive council of the KCK.

The Central Headquarters of the People’s Defence Forces (HSM) expressed support for the KCK’s call and said on February 11 that the guerrillas were ready to do their part to alleviate the suffering of people.

On March 27, the KCK Executive Council co-chair Besê Hozat announced that the unilateral ceasefire would remain in place until after the elections to be held in Turkey on May 14.

In a message to its commanders and fighters on March 23, the People’s Defence Centre (HSM) Headquarters Command stated that the AKP-MHP government may escalate its attacks before the upcoming elections on May 14. “As is known to all, our movement declared inaction after the earthquakes in Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria. Our Headquarters Command also confirmed this decision. However, the fascist AKP-MHP regime turns a blind eye to this extraordinary situation and continues its attacks against our forces. This fascist state does not respect any conscience. It wants to maintain its power and keep the regime alive over the death of our people. We have declared inaction, which is, however, disturbed by the

enemy. Our people and the public are already aware of the situation and see how humane, popular and social our attitude is, and how unscrupulous the occupying Turkish state is.”

HSM pointed out that, “The stance of our movement is right, but the enemy does not listen to it. On the contrary, it is increasing its attacks and consolidating the chauvinist, racist wave in the society of Turkey. It wants to start a war before the elections. For this, it will carry out attacks. All of us, all friends, must be prepared for such a situation. No one should abandon caution. On the contrary, everyone must develop strength. In this critical and delicate period, the military forces as well as the political and social forces must be very careful and be prepared for all possible developments. More attention and caution are needed today than ever before.”

‘KCK’s decision is overlooked’

Speaking to the Mezopotamya Agency (MA), mothers in the Cizre district of Sirnak province reacted to Turkey’s ongoing attacks and called for a cessation of attacks.

One of the mothers, Nafiye Küçük (57) said that the KCK’s inaction was very important. “The PKK does not carry out any attack, but Turkey attacks every day. The inaction decision declared by the PKK is important because of the earthquake. We want no one to die and we promote a solution. International powers also ignore the KCK’s decision and overlook Turkey’s attacks. Turkey should stop its attacks.”

‘Turkey should also stop its attacks’

Zeynep Yılmaz (58) said: “If Turkey is in favour of peace, it should respond to the KCK’s inaction. We do not want anyone to die. Turkey should also stop its attacks and declare a ceasefire. Countless people died because of the earthquakes, but Turkey still did not stop its attacks.”

‘Erdogan should finally stop’

Fatma Akça (68) said: “Erdoğan should have a conscience. We want those children to return to their houses. Erdoğan gets his own way. He should finally stop.”

Zeynep Ergen (69) called on both sides to stop the war, saying: “We, Kurds, want nothing but peace. There is no justice, no law in the country. Turkey should also cease its attacks as the PKK has already done so.”

Eartquake and flood in Kurdistan

Three earthquake victims injured in fire that broke out in their tent in Iskenderun

ANF - HATAY - 26 MARCH 2023

A fire broke out at 2 am on Sunday morning in a tent set up for earthquake victims in the borough of Denizciler in Iskenderun (province of Hatay).

Ertuğ Veli Eker (18) and his siblings Yeşim Eker (17) and Elif Mislina Eker (4) were injured in the fire, which is believed to have originated from an electrical contact.

The two sisters, whose condition was stated to be serious, were first referred to Dörtüol State Hospital and then to Adana City Hospital where they are undergoing treatment.

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Damascus government prevents delivery of AANES aid to Aleppo and Shehba

ANF - 27 MARCH 2023

In the wake of the Turkey-centered earthquakes that also devastated parts of Syria on February 6, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) launched a campaign called “Together for Humanity” and continues providing aid to the affected areas. On Sunday, AANES sent two trucks of aid from Kobanê Canton to the al-Tayiha crossing in Manbij to be delivered to Aleppo and Shehba.

In a statement on Sunday, the Euphrates Region Autonomous Administration Social Affairs and Works Committee Co-Chair Helin Hajim said that they had been able to get permission to deliver aid to the quake-hit areas. Yet, the trucks with humanitarian aid have been kept waiting at al-Tayiha crossing by the Damascus regime for the second day in a row.

Following the Damascus government’s obstruction of aid delivery to Aleppo on March 14, AANES withdrew the humanitarian aid convoy from al-Tayiha crossing. The Damascus government also prevented the passage of 100 fuel trucks prepared by AANES to be delivered to Aleppo and Shehba for 9 days.

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People of Antakya still in need of shelter 51 days after the earthquake

ZEYNEP KURAY - HATAY - 28 MARCH 2023

Although 51 days have passed since the earthquake, the problem of shelter in Antakya has not yet been solved. There are still piles of rubble on all the streets in the city and the earthquake victims mainly need tents and containers. The disaster management authority, AFAD, is shirking its responsibility and turning to the heads of the neighbourhoods in this regard. In the Ekinçi neighbourhood, some people are sheltering in tents given to them by Istanbul's Kartal district municipality. Others sleep in greenhouses and many others in their neighbours' tents because they cannot find a tent of their own. The residents of Ekinçi are demanding an urgent solution to the problem of accommodation.

One of them is Süleyman Önal. He was only able to find a tent a month after the earthquake and is very worried about the helplessness of his son, who is 94 per cent mentally disabled. His house was damaged in the earthquake and cannot be entered. His son had an epileptic seizure as a toddler and needs a safe environment, Önal said: "After the earthquake, we went to our relatives in Mersin because our house was damaged. But my son couldn't cope there, so we had to return to Hatay. We couldn't find a tent here for a long time. We only managed with the help of our neighbours. We couldn't go to the tent city because my son is always screaming and undressing in public. This causes unrest in the neighbourhood. He also goes off on his own and we can't find him for hours. Since he knows the area, he knows where to return to. But if he gets lost in an unknown place, neither I nor his mother can find him."

Önal now lives with his wife and son in a tent, but that brings big problems. His son is very afraid and screams. Önal stated that they urgently need a container to get out of this situation: "The tents are here side by side with our neighbours. My son is afraid of the tent and therefore always wants to stay outside. When he is afraid, he throws a fit and screams. Everyone is then worried. We can't control him because he is very strong. That's why we urgently need a container. At least it will be like a house, and he can stay there. We are in a very difficult situation. We are waiting for a helping hand for a container. That is our priority request at the moment."

Aylin Anlar, who has to live in the tent she put up in her garden because her house was damaged in the earthquake, also stressed that they urgently need containers. In Antakya, heavy storms regularly occur at Easter, she said, adding: "Our tents were flooded by the rain. The beds were soaked, we couldn't find a place to let the children sleep, and now the storm is coming. I don't think the tents can withstand it. In our normal life before the earthquake, the roofs were blown off in the spring storms."

Life is getting harder every day, Aylin Anlar stated: "In the summer, snakes, reptiles and scorpions will appear. How will we survive in this tent? We have no idea. The problems in winter are different from those in summer. For this reason, we urgently need to be provided with containers. This is our demand to the authorities."

Another resident of Ekinçi is Oğuz Cengiz. He has not received a tent from AFAD despite repeated requests. Years ago, he had an accident at work as a construction worker, and since then he has had a walk-

ing disability. He told the authorities about this, but they still did not provide him with a tent. His flat was badly damaged in the earthquake. "Although I repeatedly told the authorities that I was disabled, I did not get a tent. I had to stay in our neighbours' tent. For this reason, I cannot bring my family here. I cannot leave this place because of the house, all our belongings are inside. We are unhappy and devastated, but no one hears our voices. I am asking the authorities once again for help."

Ersin Atasoy had to put his parents up in a tractor trailer. He himself had initially stayed in his damaged house because there were no other accommodation options. "51 days have passed since the earthquake, but the lack of tents continues. I got a tent from the mukhtar, but it is much too small. Therefore, my mother and father have to sleep in a tractor trailer. My three- and four-year-old children are coming tomorrow, but there is no place for them to sleep. I can't put them in the house because of the danger of collapse, but there is no tent either. I am thinking about what to do. I need help," said Ersin Atasoy.

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ILO: Urgent support needed for hundreds of thousands of workers after earthquakes

ANF - 28 MARCH 2023

Hundreds of thousands of workers in Turkey and Syria have lost their livelihoods because of the earthquakes that hit the south-eastern provinces of Turkey and northern regions of Syria in February. Without urgent and dedicated support, poverty, informality and child labour are expected to increase, according to the new International Labour Organization (ILO) assessments of the labour market impact of the disaster.

"Employment promotion is central to a successful and inclusive response to this disaster," said ILO Director-General, Gilbert F. Houngbo. "People can only begin to rebuild their lives if they have rebuilt their livelihoods. We owe it to those who have lost so much in the earthquake to ensure that the principles of social justice and decent work are firmly embedded in the recovery and reconstruction process."

Initial data from Turkey suggest the earthquake left more than 658,000 workers unable to earn their living. The government says that more than 150,000 workplaces are unusable. The ILO estimates that these affected workers face average income losses of more than US\$230 per month each for as long as the disruption continues. Overall, the crisis is likely to have reduced take-home labour income by around US\$150 million per month in the affected areas.

The affected provinces in Turkey are home to more than four million workers, most of whom work in agriculture, manufacturing, trade or other low-value-added services. In Malatya, 58.8 per cent of work hours are estimated to have been lost, while in Adiyaman the figure is 48.1 per cent and in Hatay the figure is more than 45.2 per cent.

In addition to employment losses, the ILO's assessment on Turkey warns about increased risks to occupational safety and health, as well as child labour.

In Syria, where 12 years of civil war had already taken a huge toll on the economy and labour market, the assessment finds that around 170,000 workers have lost their jobs as a result of the earthquakes. This has directly affected around 154,000 households and more than 725,000 people. Around 35,000 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) have also been affected. This temporary 'disemployment' has led to total labour income losses equivalent to at least US\$5.7 million a month.

The five Syrian districts (or governorates) worst affected – Aleppo, Hama, Idleb, Lattakia and Tartous – were home to an estimated 42.4 per cent of the country's total population. This included around 7.1 million people of working age (16 or older), of whom 2.7 million were in employment (formal and informal). 22.8 per cent of these were women.

Immediately after the earthquakes struck, the ILO engaged with the affected populations to cover the emergency needs of workers and their families.

In Turkey, the ILO is planning and implementing, in close collaboration with the national authorities, a range of interventions to support labour market and enterprise recovery. Planned initiatives include emergency labour-based enterprise programmes and working with enterprises so that they can offer decent and sustainable jobs while maintaining business continuity. The ILO is also helping business organizations and trade unions to function and provide critical services to their memberships. Dedicated initiatives will focus on seasonal agricultural workers, child workers and refugees. Further, support will be provided to social partners to ensure that they can continue to engage in recovery and reconstruction initiatives as key actors of national social dialogue.



77 environmental organizations call for measures against asbestos threat in earthquake-hit areas

ANF - 28 MARCH 2023

77 environmental and animal rights organizations and unions in Turkey released a written statement about the hazardous threat after the earthquake and listed the precautions to be taken. The statement emphasized that the efforts to remove the ubiquitous rubble that produces asbestos threatens public health and the ecosystem.

Experts say that asbestos is an insulating and carcinogenic substance.

'Ecological balance rather than capital'

The statement pointed out that the debris was being removed quickly without irrigation work. It noted that during the demolition and removal, harmful chemicals were mixed with the air, soil and water. Moreover, protective equipment against the risk of asbestos was not used.

The statement listed the demands of the environmental organizations as follows:

- All the debris removal operations should be stopped immediately, except for the excavation storage areas designated before and after the earthquake. The names and locations of the designated areas should be made public, and the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), urban/ecological organizations and local representatives should be allowed to inspect these areas. Debris wastes that contain various chemicals should be kept in storage areas that meet the hazardous waste storage conditions.
- Debris removal operations should be carried out in a way that protects the ecological balance and the lives of the workers, rather than being capital-oriented, by taking the necessary precautions for workers' health and safety.
- A report on whether demolished and damaged houses contain asbestos and other hazardous substances should be revealed to the public.
- The rubble that contains asbestos and hazardous substances should be separated and removed based on scientific methods and stored in a way that does not harm the life cycle.
- Transparent joint coordinations should be established and these should contain all local subjects, including public institutions responsible for debris removal and dumping, especially the ministry of environment, urbanism and climate change and ecology organizations, professional chambers, city councils, unions.



Damascus government embargo on Shehba continues in Ramadan

ANF - SHEHBA - 29 MARCH 2023

For the Afrin IDPs in the Shehba canton, this Ramadan is not the same as it used to be. While the government of Damascus continues to impose a heavy embargo on the region, the Turkish army and its mercenaries continue to commit crimes in occupied Afrin.

Speaking to ANHA, Emina Ebdil Yesin, who immigrated from Rajo district and resides in the Resistance Camp, said: "Six years have passed, and we are still far from our homes and lands. We are staying in the camps. We hope to return to our land one day. Our hope is our land."

She added: "We are on the holy days of Ramadan, but we still cannot cook every day due to the high prices of vegetables."

Expressing concern over the embargo imposed on the Shehba canton by the Damascus government, Yesin said: "The increase in the prices of goods stems from the policies of the Damascus government that target the people of the region."

Fatme Mihemed, another resident of the Resistance Camp, said: “Due to the embargo in the region, we can't cook most of the time.”

Mihemed revealed that they could not buy food even in Ramadan due to high food prices.

A refugee named Omer Hemkeyi said that this year's problems were more troublesome than previous years because the region was under siege. He added that the reason for this was the ambitions of the Damascus government.

— ★ —

Tent cities in Hatay flood because of heavy rain

ZEYNEP KURAY - HATAY - 30 MARCH 2023

Due to the heavy rain and storm that hit in Hatay, the earthquake victims once again suffered greatly. Especially in Samandağ District, the tent cities established by AFAD flooded and the tents became unusable. Having experienced the same grievances a week ago, the public once again protested the fact that the authorities did not take any precautions.

‘No official came to help!’

The tent city built by AFAD in Samandağ Deniz Mahallesi was flooded. The earthquake victims, who tried to save their few belongings from the tents and drain the water by their own means, protested. Emphasizing that the tents were destroyed by the rain, one of the earthquake survivors, Filiz Baştürk, told ANF: “It rained, the tent became like this. All of our belongings got wet, we were left with nothing. No official came to help. Here we are alone. We don't know where to sleep. We had the same situation a week ago. But no solution was found. Now we need a container.”

‘Tents put up in the wrong place!’

Süleyman Başaran, who raised the pebbles so that his tent would not flood once again, emphasized that those who set up these tents were guilty. Explaining that they had to raise the middle part of the ground before setting up the tents, Başaran said: “The right and left sides of this area are higher than where the tents are set up. Therefore, when it rains, the middle of the field becomes like a pool. Now we need containers because this is nothing but the misery we live in,” he said.

‘Tents are overcrowded’

Shirin Daduk said the tents are overcrowded. Six people stayed in a tent, said Daduk, adding: “We are six people in a tiny place. As if that wasn't enough, now the tent got flooded due to rain. There was a danger of the tents being blown away by the storm. They asked us to secure the tents. But what are we going to secure them with? If only there was a container, we wouldn't be better.”

Sevim Yatkın, whose tent also flooded, said: “If the state had given us a hand, had brought a large container or set up our tents on high ground, this place would not have flooded.” Daduk said, “May God not inflict such pain on my enemy.”

Earthquake survivor Gönül Demir, whose daughter is 90 percent disabled, protested the abandonment by the state. “No one cares about the people. No officials came. They want to kill people just as they let them die in the earthquake. Nobody came to say what are you doing? Did you die or are you alive? I have a disabled daughter and I've been struggling all night. I'm trying to put stones on the sides of the tent so it doesn't get blown away.”

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Human Rights Violations

Police in Doğubeyazıt take 5 members of Ergün family into custody

ANF - AĞRI - 25 MARCH 2023

Police raided the house of the Ergül family in Uluyol Mahallesi in Doğubeyazıt (Bazîd) in the province of Ağrı (Ağırî).

Five members of the family, Beritan Ergül, Gülcan Ergül, Serhat Ergül, Leyla Ergül and Harun Rojhat Ergül, were taken into custody following the raid.

Police searched the house, breaking the doors, scattering all furniture and the belongings of the family and also excavated the garden.

The detained people are giving their statements at the police station.

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Vienna City Council recognizes Halabja massacre as genocide

ANF - VIENNA - 25 MARCH 2023

Approving a joint motion submitted by the Greens, the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS), the Vienna City Council has recognized the poison gas attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja on 16 March 1988 as genocide. In doing so, the Austrian Human Rights

City commits to uphold the memory of the victims of Halabja genocide and to prevent any attempts to relativise these atrocities.

“This is a historic moment in Austrian political history,” said Berivan Aslan (Greens), a Viennese councillor of Kurdish origin, whose initiative brought about the resolution. For the first time, a massacre of the Kurdish population was recognized - with the agreement of all parties. Now the Austrian National Council must follow suit. The Vienna City Council calls on the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament to also classify the human rights crime of Halabja as genocide.

The attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Husein was the world’s largest poison gas attack on a populated area up to that time. More than 5,000 of the 70,000 inhabitants at the time died of agonising suffocation within a few hours, and another 10,000 suffered severe injuries and long-term damage. Even today, the victims and their descendants struggle with late effects: an unusually high number of cases of malignant cancer, skin diseases, respiratory problems, infertility, miscarriages and congenital deformities are just some of them.



Women in Van most affected by economic crisis

ANF - VAN - 26 MARCH 2023

Van is one of the provinces hit hardest by the economic crisis, and women are seriously affected by this situation.

The ongoing deep economic crisis in Turkey continues to affect most citizens. Due to the economic crisis, hundreds of thousands of workplaces were closed and millions of people were left unemployed. Van, Hakkari, Bitlis and Ağrı were the poorest cities in 2022. Women are among those most affected by the economic crisis.

Saime Erbil and her family moved to Bostaniçi in İpekyolu (province of Van) two years ago. She earns her living by looking after animals.

Looking after a family of 11 with the animals she feeds

Saime Erbil is trying to support her family with her 5 cows. Her husband and children are unemployed, said Erbil, adding that “there is no work force, the children are unemployed. We look after cows, we sell their milk, we make and sell the cheese we produce. We lived in the village before, but we had to come here because my father-in-law, mother-in-law, and my daughter are ill. Livestock is a very difficult business and requires a lot of effort. We’re trying to support 11 people by looking after these animals.”

Life in the city is very hard

Erbil said that they are trying to make use of everything from the animals. “We are now collecting the manure where the animals stay in the winter. We remove some of it to prepare for the winter, we use it for

heating in stoves. I use the other part as fertilizer from the garden. We look after them, they look after us. We take good care of the animals, so they are useful to us for many things. This is our job. If we weren't doing this, we wouldn't know how to survive. Life in the city is very difficult. We cannot live without working. The crisis arrived and no one could make a living anymore. Life used to be beautiful. We went to the highlands in our villages. We had sheep. We were riding horses. Life was so beautiful. But now we can only look after a few cows here. And we are making a living with these animals."

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Police in Helsinki attack demonstration in solidarity with Kurds

ANF - HELSINKI - 26 MARCH 2023

A "We won't bend for Turkey" march was held by Riseup4RojavaFinland and Aurora Helsinki along with the local Kurdish community in Helsinki.

Two hundred people came together to march from Senaatintori to the Turkish embassy and to show, said the organizers, "their solidarity with the Kurdish movement against the attacks by the fascist Turkish state and demanded arms trade between Finland and Turkey to be stopped, as well as condemning the attacks on freedom of expression by the Finnish police."

The police reacted with dozens of officers in riot gear armed with FN303 anti-riot weapons, said the organizers in a statement, adding that when "a performance against the Turkish government was about to start, the police attacked the performers and "arrested" a doll depicting the Turkish dictator Erdogan as well as a person who tried to film a fascist counter-demonstrator."

According to the police, the doll was "committing the crime of defamation against the Turkish dictator, Erdogan." The internationalist youth managed to push the police back and the performance went on.

The statement by Riseup4RojavaFinland and Aurora Helsinki said: "The police have taken the same stance it did 4 months ago in the 'Helsinki without nazis' march, where it tried to force the Kurdish community to hide the flags of PKK, KCK and YPG/YPJ.

We, Riseup4RojavaFinland and Aurora Helsinki condemn the actions of the fascist police, who will do anything Erdogan asks them to, just to get Finland a place in the imperialist club of war criminals and dictators, the NATO. We call for all internationalists who support the Kurdish struggle for democracy, ecology and freedom of women to take a stance against police repression from Helsinki to Amed, from Oulu to Tehran. We call for you to rise up in protest against the fascist structures of the capitalist nation-state both in Europe and in the middle-east."

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Turkish state-linked mercenaries torture young man protesting Jindirêş massacre

ANF - 27 MARCH 2023

Afrin Human Rights Organization reported that “Sultan Silêman Shah” (Emşat) mercenaries tortured Mihemed Ebdo Hido in Şiyê district. The Human Rights Organization added that Mihemed Ebdo Hido, participated with Kurdish symbols in the protests for the 4 people who were killed in Jindirêş on 21 March, Newroz day.

The organization stated that mercenaries raided the house of the young man from Afrin at night, took him out of the house, brought him to Devewlê, tortured him and threatened to kill him.

In addition, the human rights organization said that the mercenaries caused difficulties for the citizens who tried to cross into Jindirêş from the checkpoint on the road to the village of Hemama in the south of Şiyê district.

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18 detained in police operation against HDP and DBP in Suruç

ANF - URFA - 27 MARCH 2023

Police forces stormed several houses in Suruç district of Urfa early Monday morning and detained 18 people.

District co-chairs of the DBP (Democratic Regions' Party) and HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) are among those detained who have been imposed a 24-hour ban on access to lawyers, a systematic and arbitrary measure implemented against those detained in political operations.

The detainees include former co-mayor Hülya Demir, HDP district co-chair Yaşar Gündüzalp and DBP district co-chair Rojda Binici.

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Two Turkish police officers accused of torturing 14-year-old released

ANF - AMED - 29 MARCH 2023

Five Turkish police officers, who were detained within the scope of the investigation carried out on the abduction and torture of 14-year-old Y.D. in Amed's Lice district on 21 March, were sent to prison on 26 March by the prosecutor's office on charges of "deprivation of liberty and deliberate injury". The Lice Criminal Judgeship of Peace issued an arrest warrant for police officers İsmail Akkuş, Emre Özcan and Gökhan Bay on the charge of "deliberate injury". Two other police officers were released.

An arrest warrant was issued on Monday for Police Chief Aykut Oral and police officer Hayrettin Çakmak, who were released upon the objections of the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and the complainant's deputies. The two police officers, who were given a warrant for their arrest at the Criminal Court of First Instance, were released by the Lice Criminal Court of Peace on the condition of "judicial control".

Amed Bar Association President Nahit Eren announced that they will appeal the decision.

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Autonomous Administration hands over 5 ISIS family members to Norway

ANF - QAMISHLO - 29 MARCH 2023

The Northern and Eastern Syria Autonomous Administration Foreign Relations Department said in a statement that a Norwegian delegation headed by Eric Hussam, from the Norwegian Embassy in Baghdad, visited the Northern and Eastern Syria region.

The Norwegian delegation was received by Robel Beho, deputy co-chair of the Foreign Relations department, Xalid İbrahim, member of the Executive Committee of the Foreign Relations Department, and a YPJ representative.

At the meeting, the political, humanitarian, security and economic situation of the region was evaluated and the diplomats stated that the Syrian crisis should be resolved according to UN Resolution 2254.

Robel Beho said: "The Autonomous Administration regards the national dialogues in Syria as the basis for peace and a just political solution. We see the resolution of the conflict and the preservation of Syria's unity in ending the Turkish occupation."

Beho called on the international community to stop war crimes and demographic change in the Turkey-occupied territories.

Thanking the Autonomous Administration, Eric Hussam said: “Norway is closely monitoring the humanitarian and political situation in the region,” and added that his country will “continue to give humanitarian aid to Syria, and especially to Northern and Eastern Syria.”

At the end of the meeting, the Autonomous Administration handed over 5 ISIS family members, 2 women and 3 children, to the Norwegian state officials.

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Families of slain Iranian protestors commemorate Amini

ANF - 29 MARCH 2023

The “Jin, Jiyan, Azadi” (Woman, Life, Freedom) uprising continues despite massive oppression and detentions in the cities of Iran and Rojhilat (East Kurdistan). Teachers and workers organize demonstrations to advocate their rights in many cities.

Visit to Amini's grave

Relatives of those killed during the mass anti-government protests visited the grave of Kurdish woman Jina Mahsa Amini in the Ayçi Cemetery in the city of Seqiz. The family of Simko Mewludi, who lost his life in the demonstrations in Mahabad, also visited Amini's grave and commemorated those who lost their lives in the demonstrations.

Protest against mandatory headscarf

Despite the Iranian regime's imposition of the mandatory veil, the number of women walking around in public spaces without a headscarf is increasing gradually. Many women took photos without a headscarf at the Newroz celebrations and shared them on their social media accounts to protest the mandatory headscarf.

Iranians also protested a new law promoted by some parties in the parliament to enforce strict dress codes. Women will have to pay a fine from 500 thousand to 3 million tomans for flouting the country's hijab mandate.

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Justice Vigil of Şenyaşar family on day 737

ANF - URFA - 29 MARCH 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.

Emine Şenyaşar and her son Ferit (who was also injured in the attack), have been holding a Justice Vigil in front of the Courthouse of Urfa since 9 March 2021, demanding those responsible to be brought to account.

On day 737 of their vigil, the Şenyaşar family shared the following message on their social media account: “We are fighting for a humane life. We demand a fair ruling for the sake of life and justice. We are sick and tired.”

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YouTube closes Med Music TV channel without any explanation

ANF - 30 MARCH 2023

According to a written statement made on behalf of Med Music, the YouTube TV channel was closed without any explanation. The statement said that it was extremely regrettable that the fascist attacks against the channel were continuing and added that “the closure of our music channel, which broadcasts culture and art, is an attack on the values of the Kurdish people.”

The statement continued: “The national values and symbols of the Kurdish people are banned without any justification and are censored in violation of international broadcasting principles. The implementation of the local decisions taken by the fascist governments on international platforms is a political and biased initiative. Google and YouTube have repeatedly censored or restricted the content published by the Kurdish people. We expect these practices to be ended and Kurdish national values to be respected. We condemn this unfair practice against the symbols and culture of Kurdish national values.”

The statement said: “We state that we will never be discouraged by such practices and attempts to prevent our people from reaching their values through news, culture and art. We will continue to find the space to broadcast our content by adhering to our publishing principles in the strongest way, in order to bring culture to the public. We will maintain our presence on every possible platform so that our people can reach us.”

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10 people detained in Antalya

ANF - ANTALYA - 30 MARCH 2023

Turkish police stormed several houses and detained 10 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.

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

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23 people sent to prison in Suruç

ANF - URFA - 31 MARCH 2023

23 people, including Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) district co-chairs, were taken into custody following house raids in Suruç (Pirsûs), in the province of Urfa (Riha) on 27 March. They were detained on charges of "being a member of a terrorist organization" and "providing finance to the organization". They were brought to the Urfa Courthouse on Thursday after their statements at the police station.

The prosecutor referred 23 people to the Criminal Judgeship of Peace with a request for detention. The request was upheld and the 23 people were sent to prison on charges of "being a member of a terrorist organization".

Those arrested are: Former Pirsûs Municipality Co-Mayor Hülya Demir (51), HDP District Co-Mayor Yaşar Gündüzalp (39), DBP District Co-Chair Rojda Binici (53), Avni Gökhan (55), Ayşe Aksu (54), Bülent Koçyiğit (45), Ferdi Karakelle (28), Ferit Bali (37), Feryal Çelikbaş (49), İbrahim Bülbül (46), İsmet Bali (46), Mahide Kurttekin (49), Mahmut Bali (39), Mehmet Akif Yıldız (39), Mustafa Bali (23), Nermin Şakir (60), Mustafa Bali (59), Osman Akgün (55), Sabri Kaya (56), Salih Kaplan (44), Savaş İlhan (36), Veysel Bali (34) and Zeki Bali (40) .

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Human bones discovered in central Van

ANF - VAN - 31 MARCH 2023

Human bones have been discovered during a construction excavation in the garden of the Hüsrev Paşa Primary School on Cumhuriyet Street. The police took strict security measures in the surrounding area and did not allow anybody to approach it.

In the past, there was no cemetery in the area where the bones have been found.

The incident became public when a citizen reported it to the Human Rights Association (IHD) Van Branch on March 30.

IHD administrators and the Van Bar Association conducted investigations in the area and applied to the prosecutor's office.

Van Bar Association's Head Sinan Özaraz said: "The prosecutor came to the scene and ordered the police to take security measures after a quick inspection. The prosecutor's office stopped the construction and will start an investigation today. The human bones discovered in the area will be collected for an investigation."

It is reported that 2 skulls and many bones have been found in the excavation area so far. The human bones buried at a depth of 2 meters have been found side-by-side.

The school in question was built about 50 years ago. There is no reliable information about what this place was used for before.

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Newroz

Tens of thousands celebrate Newroz in Frankfurt

ANF - FRANKFURT - 25 MARCH 2023

Thousands of Kurds from all over Germany gathered in Frankfurt on Saturday to celebrate the Kurdish New Year, Newroz. The festival was marked by the struggle between authoritarian regimes in the Middle East such as Turkey or Iran and the resistant peoples, stated KON-MED, pointing out that.

Around 40,000 people from all over the country gathered for the central Newroz rally at Rebstockpark to celebrate their festival of resistance. According to KON-MED, many more could have come if booked bus trips had not been cancelled at short notice by some companies in NRW.

The square was decorated with flags in the Kurdish colours of red, yellow and green, with banners reading “Jin Jiyan Azadî” (Woman, Life, Freedom) and “Başûr, Bakur, Rojava, Rojhilat - Kurdistan yek welat” (South, North, West, East - Kurdistan is one country). There were also many flags with the portraits of martyrs of the Kurdish resistance, such as Zeynep Kınacı and Mazlum Doğan. Pictures of the founder of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan, were also on display. One of the central demands was the freedom of the Kurdish leader in order to support a peaceful political solution to the Kurdish question.

The ceremony began with a minute of silence to the Kurdish national anthem Ey Reqîb. The welcoming speeches were given by KON-MED chairpersons Zübeyde Zümrüt and Engin Sever. “Öcalan represents the hope for freedom and just peace for millions of people in all four parts of Kurdistan. But since the Turkish government broke off peace negotiations in 2015, Öcalan has effectively been in total isolation, and the entire country with him. For a sustainable and just peace in Kurdistan, this state of affairs must end. The gate to Imrali must open,” Zümrüt said.

Engin Sever talked about the repression of German authorities against politically active Kurds in the Federal Republic of Germany and spoke of a criminalisation policy which, he said, had its roots in the ban on the PKK’s activities. “This approach does not only restrict the fundamental rights of the Kurdish community in this country, but also actively prevents a solution to the Kurdish question. Instead of positioning itself at the side of a fascist regime like the Erdogan government, Germany should respect the Kurds’ right to self-determination and support their struggle against oppression,” Sever stated.

Demir Çelik from the Federation of Democratic Alevi (FEDA) was another speaker. The former member of parliament of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), who now lives in exile in Europe, first commemorated the victims of the devastating earthquakes of 6 February in the Turkish-Syrian border region, whose epicentre was in Kurdistan. “Our thoughts are with the relatives of the people who lost their lives in this terrible disaster,” Çelik said. The politician deplored the systematic discrimination in relief supplies, emergency aid and the recovery of earthquake victims in Alevi areas, including the Kurdish province of Maraş and the Arab-Alevi region of Hatay.

“State authorities did not go to the Alevi villages in the earthquake area until days later, if at all. Countless villages where people were still lying in the rubble were systematically ignored and civilian aid was blocked. This action exemplifies how the Turkish regime is using the catastrophe to wipe out minorities in the country,” Çelik stressed and spoke of targeted state measures to trigger mass emigration in the Alevi regions. “It is a policy aiming at genocide that the Turkish state is pursuing again these days to complete the centuries-old policy of forced emigration. We call on our people to resist the depopulation of Kurdistan.”

Mustafa Abdullah Sultani of the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) recalled the struggle of the people and especially the women in Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan) and Iran for their rights and freedoms, and paid tribute to the victims of the “Jin, Jiyan, Azadî” protests, which were ignited by the violent death of the 22-year-old Kurdish woman Jina Mahsa Amini in Iranian police custody last September, and thanked all the people who participated in this “revolution led by women and the youth”. “This revolution can be-

come the foundation for a democratic nation. It is of existential importance that the peoples of Iran and Rojhilat work together to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of this historic resistance,” he said.

Other political messages were delivered by Mike Josef (Frankfurt’s candidate for mayor), Kaweh Mansoori (Member of the German Parliament), Deborah Düring (Member of the German Parliament) and Philipp Jacks (Chairman of the DGB Frankfurt-Rhein-Main). There were also music and cultural contributions on stage, among others by Mizgîn Tahîr, Lale Koçgün and Kevana Zêrîn. Many people danced to the lively rhythms on the muddy ground after a downpour. For the numerous participants, Newroz was a colourful festival with encounters with compatriots from all over Germany.

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Newroz celebrated in Budapest

ANF - BUDAPEST - 26 MARCH 2023

Newroz was celebrated for the first time in a long time in Budapest. Kurds living in and around Budapest attended the event where artists Şiwan Perwer, Kewe, Ciwan Aydın, Arif Cep and Koma Rojava took the stage. Friends of the Kurdish people also attended the celebration.

In the event where the slogans of “Biji Serok Apo” and “Biji Berxwedana Guerrilla” were chanted frequently, Newroz was celebrated with dances.

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Kurds and Italians celebrate Newroz in Pisa

ANF - PISA - 26 MARCH 2023

Kurds and Italians gathered in Pisa city to celebrate Newroz, Kurdish New Year, on 25 March evening, lighting a bonfire and dancing around it.

Speakers representing the Kurdish Committee, Kurdish Red Crescent (Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê) -Italy and Women’s House (Mala Jin) highlighted the importance of solidarity with the Kurdish people and denounced the isolation regime imposed on Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, the Turkish state’s occupation attacks in Kurdistan. Speakers also talked about the current political, economic and social crises in Turkey.

The celebration continued with the musical performances of Şahi Abdi and Hozan Çiya, as well as an Italian singer.

Participants of the celebration collected donations for victims of the devastating earthquakes that struck northern Kurdistan and southern Turkey on February 6.

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Guerrillas: The fire of Newroz will never die down

ANF - BEHDINAN - 26 MARCH 2023

Guerrillas from the People's Defence Units (HPG) and Free Women's Troops (YJA Star) spoke to ANF regarding the Kurdish New Year, Newroz, which -they said- has great meaning and importance to the Kurdish people.

The guerillas emphasized that as the selfless defenders of the Kurdish people, they would never give up the fight against repression and genocidal policies.

HPG guerilla Ramîn Lek: We wish a happy Newroz to our Leader, people and comrades who fight the enemy on the battlefield. No matter how much the enemy attacks, our resistance will continue. Freedom guerrillas are making history every day with their resistance. Newroz has been an uprising against oppression since Kawa the Blacksmith. There are uprisings against the system in Rojhilat (East Kurdistan) and several places across the world. These uprisings are of great importance, and sacred to us as well. On the occasion of Newroz, we once again repeat our word of victory we gave to our Leader and people. After Newroz, there is 'Heroism Week' ahead of us. We follow in the footsteps of those heroes whose blood was shed for this land. We will continue the struggle of our heroes who rose up against the enemy seeking to destroy the Kurdish people.

HPG guerilla Rizgar Amanos: To us, Newroz means rebellion. Just as Kawa the Blacksmith revolted against the cruel Dehaq, so did Mazlum Doğan against repression in Amed Prison. Our comrades who fight the enemy today also maintain the Newroz tradition, following in the footsteps of Kawa the Blacksmith. The more Dehaqs emerged in history, the more insurgent Kawas appeared against them in history. The ones who rebel against Erdoğan in our time are the freedom guerillas. We, the selfless fighters committed to Reber Apo (Leader Abdullah Öcalan) and our people, will never bow to persecution and the policies of genocide. We should expand our struggle further to be worthy of our Leader and our comrades who are fighting in the battle tunnels against chemical weapons attacks. On this occasion, we wish a happy Newroz to Reber Apo and our comrades fighting on the battle front.

YJA Star guerilla Raperîn Zinar: When we talk about Newroz, we remember Mazlum Doğan, the Kawa of the modern ear, and our fallen comrades; Zekiye, Berivan, Ronah and Raşan, who followed in his footsteps. These comrades have become the symbol of Newroz. Today, a great struggle is being waged in Zap, Avaşin and Metina with the resistance spirit of the likes of Mazlum, Raşan and Zeki. We, as Apoist guerillas, state once again that the fire and torch of Newroz will never die down on these mountains. We will continue waving our freedom flag against the cruel Dehaqs of our time. Once again, we congratulate all peoples and our Leader on the Newroz festival."

General Elections in Turkey

60 million 904 thousand people will vote in 14 May elections

ANF - ANKARA - 25 MARCH 2023

The decisions taken by the Supreme Election Board (YSK) at a meeting on Thursday were published in the Official Gazette. 60 million 904 thousand 499 people will be able to vote in a total of 190 thousand 736 ballot boxes in the country in the Presidential and 28th term Parliamentary Elections to be held on 14 May. The number of voters abroad is 3 million 286 thousand 786 in 4 thousand 969 ballot boxes.

The printing of the ballot papers for the presidential election will begin on 12 April, and the printing of the ballot papers to be used in the parliamentary elections will begin on 19 April.

In the event of a second round, a total of 249 million 670 thousand 310 combined ballot papers will be printed to be used on 28 May.

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Labour and Freedom Alliance protocol handed over to the Supreme Election Board

ANF - ANKARA - 25 MARCH 2023

The leaders of the YSP (Green Left Party), TIP (Workers' Party of Turkey) and EMEP (Labour Party) signed the protocol between the parties forming the Labour and Freedom Alliance and handed it over to the Supreme Election Board (YSK) on Friday. The protocol contains the signatures of Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar and Ibrahim Akın (YSP), Erkan Baş (TIP) and Ercüment Akdeniz (EMEP). It was handed over to YSK Chair Ahmet Yener.

Parliamentary and presidential elections will be held in Turkey on 14 May. The Labour and Freedom Alliance, which also includes the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party), TÖP (Social Freedom Party), EHP (Labor Movement Party) and SMF (Federation of Socialist Councils), has not put forward its own candidate for the presidential election. For the parliamentary election to take place at the same time, the HDP, as the largest party of the alliance, will run under the umbrella of the YSP in view of the ongoing proceedings to ban the party before the Constitutional Court.

The YSP, founded in 2010, has been building party structures throughout the country in recent months in order to be admitted to the elections. Within the Labour and Freedom Alliance, however, the HDP was able to assert itself with the demand to run with a common list. TIP candidates nevertheless want to carry

their party logo alongside the common logo in order to reach voters who are distant from the Kurdish movement.

The text of the protocol is taken from the Declaration of Principles, which highlights the following:

“In this extraordinary phase we are experiencing, it is of great importance that the forces advocating labour, peace and democracy strengthen and resolutely continue the common and united struggle for the realisation of the most urgent economic and political tasks. This unity and struggle must also be a decisive and effective force in the new phase. This is also the expectation and demand of the people.

The common struggle, the strong and determined stance to be taken will be a march that will ensure the realisation of the urgent economic demands of the people and steps towards democratisation. This march represents the solidarity and alliance of the working people, the labourers, the poor, the women, the youth, the environment and the defenders of human rights. They all represent a common, strong and determined basis of resistance.

Our aim is to build a democracy based on the true sovereignty of the people on the basis of democratic, liberal and egalitarian principles. We can build a people-dominated social order based on labour, peace, freedom and democratic values. This is possible with the transformative power of the oppressed and exploited peoples.”

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Green Left Party opens its electoral campaign in Istanbul

ANF - ISTANBUL - 26 MARCH 2023

The Green Left Party started its electoral campaign in Istanbul with a stand in Kadıköy Pier Square. The stand, which was opened at the presence of HDP Deputy Musa Piroğlu, was immediately very crowded. The police tried to prevent people from dancing, but the crowd loudly protested.

Green Left Party Kadıköy District co-chair, Koray Türkay, called on people to go to the polling station as observers.

HDP Istanbul MP, Musa Piroğlu, said: “They closed our party down many times, they attacked us many times. They thought that they would stop us by closing our parties, arresting our deputies, and taking our presidents hostage. They thought that they would prevent the honorable struggle of the people. They failed. If they think they will stop the HDP and hinder our will in this election, they will fail again. When they close the HDP, the Yeşil Sol (Green Left) party emerges. They couldn't stop us with trustees. They raided our buildings, and again they couldn't stop us. Because the HDP is not a building, the HDP is not a ballot box. The HDP is the people, the HDP is the struggle itself, the HDP is the will of the people.”

Underlining that on 14 May, an important election will take place, Piroğlu continued: “They impose tyranny on us, they impose hell on us. We are going to the elections in the shadow of the earthquake. More than a hundred thousand people were left to die under the rubble before our eyes. The wounded

were left to freeze to death. And our bodies are still waiting under the rubble. They sold tents, blood and food for money, and now they think that with the same money they can build houses and buildings and buy our lives. We will show them our answer in the ballot box.”

Piroğlu said: “What we need is accountability. We need to hold the government accountable for this corruption. We need to hold the government accountable for our people killed in the earthquake. We need to ensure that today's sultans, today's murderers, today's thieves, are tried and punished tomorrow. And for that, we have to continue to stand together. We will win.”

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Green Left Party opens election office in Paris

ANF - PARIS - 27 MARCH 2023

Green Left Party members, supporters and local people attended the opening ceremony. After a minute's silence for all martyrs of the revolution and for those who lost their lives in the earthquake in Kurdistan, Party representatives addressed the crowd.

Party representatives and supporters said that the election office would serve as a meeting point for the promotion of party policies.

The election office will be the central place for the party's campaign, and voters will find information about party policies there. The centre will also provide a platform where voters can communicate directly with the party.

The election office will be open to visitors 7 days a week.

The address for those who want to reach the election office is: 90 Avenue Henri Barbusse, 93700 Drancy

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HDP's Zeydanoğlu: Labour and Freedom Alliance gives hope to voters

ANF - 27 MARCH 2023

The Labour and Freedom Alliance is continuing its campaign for the 14 May General Elections in Kurdistan and Turkey. Özgür Zeydanoğlu, Party Assembly Member of the People's Democratic Party (HDP), spoke to ANF about the HDP closure case, the Labour and Freedom Alliance's election campaign and the expectations of the peoples of Turkey.

Denial and destruction continue

Zeydanoğlu said that the HDP had 40 years of political tradition and that it is necessary to go back further to understand the closure case against the party. “We also need to address the reasons for the closure of political parties. The closure case is based on the exclusion of the Kurdish people from politics and preventing their legitimate demands. As we enter the centenary of the Republic, the denial and destruction against the Kurdish people continue.”

Resistance against attacks

Zeydanoğlu continued: “The exclusion of the Kurds and the HDP's demands and activities to democratize Turkey are main issues in the closure case. The crackdown on the HDP was introduced in the 2015 elections, which were a milestone for Turkey and Kurdistan. For the first time, Turkish and Kurdish people came together around democracy and the Kurdish question. Our party received more votes than the electoral threshold (10 percent), receiving broad social support. In the 2015 June elections, the HDP received votes in the Black Sea region and in Central Anatolia. This led to the emergence of violent attacks against the HDP. The point is that the fascist regime seeks to put the Kurds out of politics and prevent the HDP's policy of embracing the entire Turkey. Of course, before the closure case, we had already been subjected to a crackdown and suppression. Thus, resistance emerged against the crackdown and suppression. The closure case seeks to destroy and block this resistance.”

The Kurdish people will never remain without party

Zeydanoğlu stressed that the HDP and its components have the edge over its rivals, explaining: “Firstly, we have an advantage in terms of the electorate. You can close down a party and put an end to its corporate identity, but if the people you are doing politics with are still there, there is not much that can be done. In fact, there are not many measures we can take. Because we have taken precautions from the very beginning. Our voters remain loyal to the party. There is huge solidarity among our voters. If our party's grassroots are growing, the rest is technical issues. The Kurdish people will never remain without a party. We are a political movement accustomed to party closures.”

HDP is a very important actor

Addressing the 2023 elections in May, Zeydanoğlu remarked: “We do not think that the closure case will drive us into a corner. This process requires more sensitivity, more struggle, more attention. The HDP is not a classical establishment party. Many parties were established and came to power in this country, but then disappeared. However, the HDP is a 40-year-old political party and always plays a strategic role. Because the Kurdish question and the democratization of Turkey, which are HDP's main concerns, are very important issues that concern the future of Turkey's Kurds and Turks. Therefore, the HDP's cause in itself makes the HDP an important party. Current circumstances have made the party into a very important actor. Today, the country is run by the AKP-MHP fascist government and there is an ongoing fascism. The HDP is a party that has fought the AKP-MHP fascism the most, paid a huge price, but did not back down from the resistance. If we are discussing the dissolution and disintegration of the AKP today, we should see the contribution of the HDP's struggle.”

One of the most important elections

Zeydanoğlu emphasized that the 2023 elections would be one of the most important elections in the history of Turkey. He added: “The damage caused by the 21-year AKP rule has become unbearable. The election in May is therefore very important. Also, these elections are of great importance to the Kurdish people. We have completed our preparations accordingly. We are preparing for the election with the Labour and Freedom Alliance. We offer a third way. The Labour and Freedom Alliance is a bloc for Turkey's unification. The Labour and Freedom Alliance has caused great excitement and hope among the voters.”

Third way offers a different alternative

“All political parties that have emerged in the Republic of Turkey for 100 years have failed to present a different alternative to the public. The Labour and Freedom Alliance offers a third way, a different way. The alliance has been welcomed enthusiastically in the country. The alliance holds together valuable ideas and parties within itself. The alliance favours labour, freedom, human rights, socialism and radical democracy and offers solutions to Turkey's problems. Therefore, the alliance of various groups and ideas makes the Labour and Freedom Alliance a powerful and active alternative. We will see its election campaign more concretely in the coming days,” Zeydanoğlu concluded.



Şenyaşar family: Government will suffer huge election defeat in Urfa

ANF - URFA - 27 MARCH 2023

The justice vigil of Emine Şenyaşar, who lost her husband and two sons in an armed attack on June 14, 2018 in the Suruç district of Urfa, that involved AKP Deputy İbrahim Halil Yıldız's bodyguards and relatives, and his son Ferit Şenyaşar, who was injured in the same attack, marks its 735th day.

Emine and Ferit Şenyaşar came to the courthouse from Suruç and started today's vigil with a banner that read “Justice for Şenyaşar family”.

In a speech in front of the courthouse, Ferit Şenyaşar said that their struggle relied on justice. Şenyaşar remarked that their vigil evolved from an individual protest to a social cause. “A massacre was committed against our family in Suruç State Hospital. The perpetrator of this massacre is a deputy within the ruling AKP. The government and the President have backed this deputy. Hence, the judiciary has not worked, justice has not been served. We have elections ahead of us in May. Erdoğan's AKP is losing votes all over Turkey. But its biggest election defeat will be suffered in Urfa. The sensitive people of Urfa have embraced our struggle. We are determined, and we will continue our struggle in front of the Urfa Courthouse until justice is served.”

Mother Emine Şenyaşar noted that they had launched a Justice Vigil against oppression. She said: “Judges, prosecutors and Erdoğan know that we are right in our case. Enough is enough, release my son from prison and I'll go home. The entire world has seen their cruelty.”

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Sancar reiterates that 14 May elections are a historic appointment

ANF - ANKARA - 29 MARCH 2023

The co-chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Mithat Sancar, once again stressed the importance of the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in Ankara. The elections will be held on 14 May and the government alliance is using all means to ensure its existence, Sancar said at his party's parliamentary group meeting.

Sancar described the electoral alliance founded by the AKP and MHP, and joined by other extremist parties, as “the darkest and most dangerous alliance in our history”. Therefore, the unity and common will of all democratic forces against this alliance is more important than ever, he said, adding: “No one should forget this responsibility. It's time to show a united struggle and will to stop this dark and dangerous alliance. History and the conscience of the peoples will not forgive anyone who makes a mistake at this historic moment. We act with this responsibility, we walk our path with this awareness towards the peoples of Turkey and we are determined to end this dark and dangerous alliance.”

The HDP will publish an election declaration on 30 March, which, according to Sancar, contains a program for a democratic solution to the problems in Turkey. “It will be the program for the brighter days awaiting us, for the liberties, peace and justice that people are longing for. It will be the manifesto for a new era and a new life.”

Sancar confirmed that the HDP will run with the Green Left Party (YSP) in the parliamentary elections. This decision was made in view of the ongoing illegalization proceedings against the HDP. After the Turkish constitutional court rejected the application to suspend the proceedings until after the elections, the risk that the party would be banned was too great, said Sancar. “We know that the political struggle does not only take place in parliament. Parliamentary work alone cannot replace the struggle carried out in all other areas. But it is also very important that the determined struggle we are waging on a social and political level is reflected in Parliament. That's why we didn't take any risks and decided to run under the umbrella of the Green Left Party.”

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EMEP to contest Turkey's elections on the list of the Green Left Party

ANF - 29 MARCH 2023

The Labour Party (EMEP), an affiliate of the Labour and Freedom Alliance, has decided to contest the 14 May parliamentary elections in Turkey through the Green Left Party (YSP) list in order to avoid losing votes.

The Labour and Freedom Alliance, which has already announced its decision not to field a candidate in the presidential elections, is setting out its strategy for the parliamentary elections. The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the Green Left Party (YSP), the Workers' Party of Turkey (TIP), the Labour Party (EMEP), the Social Freedom Party (TÖP), the Labour Movement Party (EHP) and the Union of Socialist Councils (SMF), which are members of the alliance, reached a consensus on 24 March. While HDP, TÖP, EHP and SMF decided to run on the Green Left Party list, TIP and EMEP wanted to enter the election with their own logos. A protocol to this effect was submitted to the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) on the same day.

EMEP has now revised this decision because the division would lead to the loss of MP seats due to the existing electoral system. The EMEP statement describes the upcoming elections as an extremely critical moment in Turkey's history.

“The current and urgent aim of our party is to defeat one-man rule and to advance the struggle of the exploited and oppressed masses of the people. For this, it remains our priority to strengthen the joint struggle work with the Labour and Freedom Alliance. With this understanding and attitude, we as EMEP continue our preparations for participation in the elections on 14 May 2023 as part of the Labour and Freedom Alliance. For the future, the expansion and strengthening of the Labour and Freedom Alliance and for the representation of the forces standing for labour, peace and democracy and especially the working class in parliament, it was decided to participate in the elections with our own candidates on the list of the Green Left Party,” said the EMEP statement.

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Swiss BastA Party supports the Green Left Party in Turkey's elections

ANF - BASEL - 30 MARCH 2023

The Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) will contest Turkey's parliamentary elections on 14 May under the umbrella of the Green Left Party (Yeşil Sol Parti, YSP) as the risks of running as the HDP are too great because of the ongoing proceedings to ban the party.

BastA party Co-Chair Sina Deiss and party secretary Franziska Stier stated that they would support the HDP, and thus the Green Left Party in the upcoming elections.

BastA Party Co-Chair Deiss said: “Since the HDP is our sister party, we will of course give all our support to the HDP. Our party debated on what concrete support we could offer to our comrades and friends.”

HDP or the Green Left

Deiss stated that they closely followed the crackdown on the HDP and that Turkey is no longer a democratic country. She emphasized that the repressive activities by the Turkish state were overlooked by the Swiss and European states. “The crackdown and closure case against the HDP show that Turkey is no longer a democratic state. Switzerland and the European states tolerate Turkey. The HDP is already familiar with the state’s pressures. It also knows how to fight them. It doesn't make any difference to us whether the party enters the elections as the HDP or the Green Left Party. No matter how they enter the elections, our solidarity and support will always continue.”

We will monitor the elections

Noting that a delegation of the BastA party would monitor the elections to be held on 14 May, Deiss said: “In order to give stronger support to the international and Swiss delegations to go to Turkey, we will connect with our local networks, human rights institutions, feminist movements. We will call attention to the elections at the international level as much as possible. We believe that observer delegations will play an important role in these elections. Our foreign affairs commission member Sibel Arslan, a deputy of the federal parliament and deputy chair of the PACE, will also monitor the process. We do not want a second Cizre case to happen. Thus, it is important that international delegations and the UECD will be there.”

Deiss stressed that her party would support the election campaign of the Green Left party not only in Turkey but also in Switzerland. She concluded: “We will call for participation in the elections through social media. It is especially important that people living in Europe, Switzerland and Basel go to the polls and cast votes.”

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HDP launches its election campaign under the banner of the Green Left Party

ANF - ANKARA - 31 MARCH 2023

The HDP (Peoples’ Democracy Party) has launched its election campaign under the banner of the Green Left Party (Yeşil Sol Parti).

The party shared its manifesto for the 14 May elections. “Together we will bring change” said HDP co-chair Mithat Sancar, adding: “We did not bow down to oppression and this became a problem for them. We walked this road without bowing and here we are. Yes, we learned to avoid their conspiracies and

tricks. We inherited the accumulation of the tradition of struggle. We opened these roads, we walked all along and here we are. We, the Kurds, are here for a democratic solution to the problem of war, against the policies of refusal and denial. We are here for peace against hatred and enmity. We will change things together! We are here to defend life against death. We will change things together. We are here to establish local democracy, against centralized domination, for equal and free citizenship. We are here to pave the way for a democratic republic based on democracy. Together we will change things. We are here to grow and spread courage against fear.”

The event ended with the launch of the election song, titled “Here we are”.

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TÖP: On 14 May we can stop fascism!

ANF - ISTANBUL - 31 MARCH 2023

Speaking to ANF, Social Freedom Party (TOP) Istanbul Provincial Spokesperson, Nilay Kuş, said that the 14 May elections would be a turning point and added: “Before the earthquakes, we were going through a period in which the economic crisis deepened, living conditions worsened, and people could not breathe. With the earthquake, we saw that the state did not exist. It left people to die. It completely abandoned them. Therefore, we have been going through a process in which the existing anger of society has become even more visible. 14 May will be an important turning point for women, workers and young people. It will be an opportunity to stop fascism. Of course, after the elections, the process of building a new Turkey will begin.”

Pointing out that they are making preparations for what will happen on the election day, Kuş emphasized that 14 May will be a very important election. Underlining that the AKP-MHP bloc had stolen votes before, Nilay Kuş continued: “Taking into account the importance of this election process, we continue our discussions with both the Labor and Freedom Alliance and other parties on what we can do to ensure that elections are carried out in a safe way, without fraud. Meetings are held and preparations are made for this. We, as TÖP, will do our best to ensure the safety of ballot boxes wherever we are. We will work hard to take security measures. We will keep the schools and neighbourhoods where we are under control.”

We will fight together

TÖP see the Kurdish Freedom Movement as a strategic ally, said the party’s Istanbul Provincial chairperson Nilay Kuş, emphasizing that this alliance is not just because of the elections.

Saying that they also have plans for the post-election period and that the struggle will continue regardless of the results of the election, Kuş underlined that they do not view the Labor Freedom Alliance only as an electoral alliance. “From the beginning, - she said - we have been saying that this is a struggle alliance. We will continue to work and fight together after the elections.”

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After a visit to Turkey, Swiss Socialist Party calls for international pressure for free elections

ANF - 31 MARCH 2023

The Swiss Socialist Party (SP) continues its aid efforts after the Maraş-centered devastating earthquakes on February 6. The SP called on the Swiss Federal Parliament to provide effective assistance to the earthquake-affected areas.

A delegation consisting of SP Deputy Head and Swiss Federal Assembly Member Jon Pult, Federal Assembly member Mustafa Atici, Basel Canton Assembly members Edibe Goludli and Mahir Kabakci, and members of the aid organization Solidar Suisse, visited the earthquake-affected areas.

The SP delegation also met with the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) and CHP (Republican People's Party) delegations in Ankara to talk about the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held on May 14.

'The government discriminated against quake survivors'

The delegation returned to Switzerland and released a written statement about its observations.

The statement emphasized that the AKP-MHP government did not provide proper help to the people affected by the earthquake, and posed an obstacle to the holding of elections in a democratic environment.

The statement said: "During our trip to the south of Turkey, we visited, together with the aid organization Solidar Suisse, the cities of Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Pazarcık, Elbistan, Kirikhan and Antakya which were massively affected by the earthquakes. The extent of the destruction and the suffering of the people is indescribable. The number of dead and missing people, as well as houses destroyed, is significantly higher than officially reported.

Furthermore, discussions with community representatives, non-governmental aid organizations and local associations revealed the failure of government officials in disaster relief. In many cases, survivors repeatedly reported that rescue and relief teams came too late and remained insufficient. Government arbitrariness, discrimination and abuse were reported during the distribution of urgently needed relief supplies. We observed that particularly vulnerable minorities, such as the Roma people in the town of Kirikhan, who lost all their houses, still live without access to electricity, water and medical assistance seven weeks after the earthquake.

The Swiss government should work to ensure that humanitarian and reconstruction efforts are based on the 'no-harm rule'. The Swiss government should reach the people and regions that need help most, regardless of their ethnic, religious or political affiliations. It is also clear that the funds promised for restructuring will not be sufficient."

The statement urged the Swiss government to play a role in organizing relief efforts. “Many people from Turkey live in Switzerland. They have economic and political ties. Many relatives of the victims in the earthquake region reside in Switzerland.”

‘International pressure needed’

The statement also addressed the SP’s talks in Ankara and said: “HDP deputy chairs Hisyar Özsoy and Feleknas Uca emphasized the importance of the 14 May presidential and parliamentary elections for a democratic and pluralistic Turkey. For this reason, the HDP has decided not to nominate its own presidential candidate. According to Özsoy and Uca, the government controls the judiciary and tries to close the HDP shortly before the elections. It is important for the HDP to form an alliance with other small left-wing parties and contest the elections under the Green Party (Green Left Party) as a precaution against a possible closure. International pressure is now also needed for free elections to take place.”

SP deputy head Jon Pult said: “Considering the historic significance of the May 14 elections, the Swiss Federal Assembly should demand the Turkish government to ensure fair and free elections. It should also make it clear that political pressure, electoral fraud and abuse of the judiciary for political purposes in Turkey violate the principles of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, to which Turkey is a party.”

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Interview

Swiss politician Rémy Pagani: The PKK is a resistance movement

ANF - 28 MARCH 2023

Rémy Pagani, the former mayor of Geneva and a current member of the Geneva Canton Parliament, spoke to journalist Serkan Demirel for Medya Haber.

As a politician, you have been following the Kurdish question closely for a long time. How do you evaluate the Kurdish policy of the Turkish State?

First, I would like to point out that the minority in Turkey is actually the Turks, while the Kurdish people constitute the majority, and at the same time, Turkey's proletariat. Despite this fact, the denial of the Kurds is a big problem, and when the denial of the existence of the Kurdish people led to the emergence of an armed struggle.

As you know, the Turkish state is currently waging a war against the PKK in North Iraq and against the Kurdish people in Rojava. How do you evaluate Turkey's aggressive attitude towards the Kurdish people?

This stance of Turkey is completely wrong. To explain this, I would like to go back a bit and cite the history of Spain, namely the Basque Catalan problem. Currently, Basques and Catalans can speak their own language. We can also cite the case of Switzerland, where there are four official languages. Each community in the country has managed to live together by respecting the language and culture of the other circles. While it is possible for different identities to live under equality, the Turkish administration, which constitutes the Turkish bourgeoisie, prefers to fight the Kurds, banning their language, culture and identity.

The Turkish state still arrests hundreds of Kurdish politicians, the democratically elected Kurdish deputies, and puts them in prison. The Kurdish people's most basic right, the right to self-government, is denied. All this is unacceptable and criminal.

On the other hand, we see a democratic system implemented by the PKK, especially in Rojava, which can set an example for Europe as well. It is very important that women are at the centre of this system.

The Turkish state disrespects this democratic system which is implemented under the leadership of the Kurds and is increasing its attacks against the Kurdish people.

As you know, the Kurds fought and defeated ISIS, which posed a huge threat to the world. Yet, Europe and NATO prefer to remain silent about Turkey's plan to invade Rojava today. How do you evaluate the attitude of the international community?

For me, this attitude represents the hypocrisy of the USA, that is, of the West. The West needed the Kurds to eliminate ISIS, which posed a major threat to itself as well. Thanks to the Kurds, this terror threat was eliminated. However, the same West allows Erdogan to attack the Kurds who have been fighting ISIS. This attitude of the West is unacceptable.

Currently, over 10 thousand jihadists are held in Rojava prisons. It is claimed that these prisoners will be released in the event of a Turkish occupation of the region. What would you like to say in this context?

About two years ago, I went to North Iraq, namely Iraqi Kurdistan. I observed that Erdogan made a series of economic agreements with the regional administrators, and he also supports the ISIS remnants in that region. Erdogan's relationship with ISIS is not new anyway, and this is known to everyone. In this sense, Erdogan considers the PKK as an obstacle against himself. Considering Erdogan's policies and his dirty relations in the region, if Turkey invades Rojava, it will release all jihadists over there. Everyone should be aware that these detained jihadists constitute a major fascist force and is dangerous.

I also visited Shengal during my visit to the region. The traces of the massacre carried out by ISIS are still fresh. The people of Shengal fear that there will be further massacres.

So, do the international powers and community not see this danger or are they not aware of it?

Erdogan continues to wage a dirty war against the Kurds by taking advantage of the war in Ukraine and his role in this war.

Erdogan threatens the West by saying, "If you want the grain crisis to be resolved or if you want Sweden to be accepted into NATO, you will not interfere in the war I am waging in the region, especially that against the Kurds, and you will even support it."

Erdogan clearly seeks to destabilize the region and to stay in power by taking advantage of the Ukraine-Russia war for his own expansionist policy.

Considering all this, I believe that Erdogan should leave the power immediately.

Why do you think the Erdogan government should be removed or how do you evaluate this regime?

First, I should point out that the Erdogan regime is a purely dictatorial system. It is a dictatorship that seeks to arrest any member of the opposition.

For instance, why is the former Mayor of Diyarbakır, Gültan Kışanak, in prison? I followed her trial at court. The grounds for her trial and arrest are entirely based on her services as a mayor. I also served as a mayor, and I committed all the crimes she was accused of, here in Geneva. Despite these baseless accusations, Gültan Kışanak is still held in prison. If this isn't a dictatorship, then what is it?

Do you view Erdogan as a threat to Europe as well?

Yes, Erdogan is a real threat to Europe. He is a threat, especially in that he seeks to destabilize Europe. With the Russia-Ukraine war, we saw how Europe came to the brink of a conflict.

Erdogan could do even more dangerous things. He could change his strategy for an instant and support the people who will spread terror in Europe. It is very possible that he does so for his own interests.

What he does currently to get re-elected is an indication of that. For example, he arrests deputies in a way that has never been done in Europe.

For example, Spain arrested the Catalan politicians who initiated the Catalan independence referendum and declaration. This situation affected the whole of Europe, but European countries did not react much.

If NATO member Turkey, namely Erdogan, arrests parliamentarians, people will think that this is normal. We should clearly say that someone like Erdogan should not come to power. And we should take action so that democracy is genuinely respected in Turkey.

Do you think that the stance of NATO and Europe supports Erdogan's policies?

Erdogan manages to manifest his opposition to the destabilization of the Middle East and supports Israel for his own interests. He pits one group against another through hypocritical policies.

Apart from these, Erdogan is a loyal ally of NATO. The military bases of the USA in Turkey demonstrate this. There is also the Cyprus problem. Unfortunately, Erdogan manages to keep his dictatorship in power by taking advantage of all these.

We know that Erdogan mobilized ultra-nationalist Turkish groups against opposition groups in Europe at certain times. For instance, three Kurds were killed in France recently. The Kurds claim that the killings were organized by the Turkish state. What would you like to say about this?

I myself have been subjected to pressure from these groups. Before going to the trials of some trade unionists and politicians in Turkey, Turkish consular officials warned me not to go to Turkey. I went anyway. It is a fact that the ultra-nationalist group called Grey Wolves is acting in a dark way in Europe. Some Turkish authorities do not hide their affiliation with them.

If we go back to the war waged by the Turkish state in Kurdistan, the PKK released videos it released proving the Turkish use of chemical weapons against PKK guerrillas. How do you evaluate it?

I read from interviews in the press that Erdogan's army used banned chemical weapons. Moreover, when I went to Iraqi Kurdistan, I had the opportunity to talk to Kurdish fighters. For example, drones detect everything alive in the area and bomb those areas. They also kill civilians in these attacks. Unfortunately, Kurdish fighters do not have weapons to counter drones. In this sense, these attacks by the Turkish state constitute a war crime.

We went to Iraqi Kurdistan to inspect these war crimes of Erdogan on the ground, but unfortunately, they did not allow us to go to the conflict zones.

As you know, Europe and many countries keep the PKK on the list of "terrorist" organizations. How do you evaluate this?

This is a two-faced policy and serves the purpose of various power circles. NATO does not want a Kurdish autonomous region in Turkey, as in Iraq. Also, they do not want the Kurds to unite in their divided lands. Therefore, they support Erdogan's war against the Kurds by keeping the PKK on the terror list.

I think that the PKK is a resistance movement and consider it such. Thanks to this resistance that has been going on for decades, the Kurdish lands in Syria were liberated and Rojava was built. Today, a democratic system in which women rise to prominence has been built in Rojava.

As you know, Kurdish Leader Abdullah Öcalan has been kept in severe isolation for a long time. How do you evaluate this?

I condemn the isolation implemented on Mr. Öcalan and I believe that everyone should condemn it. For nearly two years, neither his family nor his lawyers have heard from him. He has been kept under severe conditions for many years.

And with the latest practices, Mr. Öcalan's isolation has turned into torture.

Previously, I visited some prisons in Turkey with delegations. Prisons in Turkey were built as psychological torture centres. You can't see anyone but the guardians. It's like hell. I visited massive prisons in Colombia where 2500 people are held, and I can say that those prisons have more humane conditions than Turkish prisons.

What would you like to say about the role of Öcalan in resolving the Kurdish question?

In my opinion, the time will come when we find solutions to the Kurdish question. Erdogan tried to resolve the Kurdish question back then, and there were political talks with Öcalan and the PKK. However, when he realized that the peace process would not be to his benefit, he abandoned his desire for a solution. A solution to armed conflicts around the world has always been found. I believe that the time will come when Mr. Öcalan becomes an actor to resolve the Kurdish question.

Wouldn't it be very difficult for him to lead such a process under these conditions?

Yes definitely. In the first place, he should be allowed to establish a connection with the outside world and his prison conditions should be improved. He should then be released to lead a peace process as the representative of the PKK.

— ★ —

Opinion

Shattering the power of the AKP

HALIT ERMIS - 26 MARCH 2023

There is hardly a moment in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan when the elections are not being talked about. Alliances, relations, contradictions, slander, possibilities, predictions....

Everyone is focused on whether or not the fascist Erdoğan/Bahçeli power will collapse, discussing the why, the how and the what for. While the news about the alliances formed or dissolved is constantly changing, it is an unchangeable fact that everyone wants to shape the game options with the Kurdish voices.

There are countless comments, predictions and analyses about who the Kurds will or will not support and why. It is striking that not only experts, but really all of them make comments and predictions on the same topic.

This focus on the Kurdish vote is due to the fact that the Kurds are the main element of this geography. They are the most dynamic force and the determining factor. At the same time, they also play the main role in determining Turkey's destiny in the new century.

It was the same in the 20th century. It was the Kurdish reality that determined the fate. But this destiny was determined by the liquidation, genocide, assimilation and mass migration of the Kurds. Now that we are at a new crossroads, the question of how destiny is determined is back on the table.

The cards are laid on the table. Traitors, deceivers, collaborators and populists have become active. All are trying to figure out how to deceive and confuse the Kurdish people and turn their memory upside down.

What has not changed in the last hundred years is the incessant hatred, agitation and attacks against the Kurdish freedom movement, its components, society and individuals, as well as the suppression of the uprisings. Their enemies are trying to condemn the Kurds once again to the fate of the 20th century and to regain power through genocide.

The representatives of the middle way, the collaborators, traitors, populists, state and government supporters and the hypocrites who want to see women with a black veil over their faces give advice to the Kurds. But they are so obvious that every word uttered comes back to them like a boomerang. For the memories of the Kurds are strong and painful, and there are so many heroic deeds next to the chain of betrayal that everything now stands side by side like white and black.

Above all, they do not understand that the Kurdish question cannot be solved by the parliamentary elections of the Turkish state or by the election of the president. What will liberate the Kurds is their self-organisation, their social, political, military, diplomatic and cultural struggle based on self-determination.

All the things mentioned are only positions to achieve this goal.

The Kurdish question in Turkey will not be solved with the parliamentary system, the presidential system or any other system. Within all these systems, it will be the active and collective struggle of the Kurds that will solve the Kurdish question.

The place of the Kurds in Turkey's political reality will not be determined by this or that person, environment or group, but by their own will and their common collective interests. The attempts of the current government supporters to create confusion on this issue are at least as ugly as those who commit genocide and deny the Kurdish people.

The best answer one can give to those who praise the Erdogan government and call for its support is to point to the Erdogan/Bahçeli government's policy towards the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. It is the fascist AKP/MHP government, which has not allowed any contact with Öcalan for two years and has strictly isolated him for more than 24 years, which carries out all kinds of attacks against the Kurdish guerrillas and uses heinous chemical weapons.

So how come they are calling on the Kurds to keep this government alive? With what face, with what morals, in the name of what national values are they doing this? The fascist AKP/MHP government is the most refined form of the century-old Kurdish-hostile mentality. The attitude of this fascist bloc towards Abdullah Öcalan is the same as the attitude towards the Kurdish people.

They do not even allow Abdullah Öcalan to address a message to the Kurdish people, even after a two-year break. Neither his family nor lawyers can meet him. This means that Öcalan has not accepted the government's impositions. The fact that there is no contact with him shows the attitude that must be taken towards the fascist AKP/MHP power. The message is clear: this power must be destroyed.

Therefore, it should not be the agenda of the Kurds to discuss the respective alliances. Prioritising the question of whether or not the Kurds can get ministries and compressing the agenda around this question means confusing the fundamental with the secondary.

Of course, in legal parliamentary systems there are ministerial calculations and the calculation of coming to power. But as long as the focus is on the struggle for the freedom of a people, the concentration on the distribution of ministerial posts is definitely a distraction from the real agenda.

There is nothing more obvious than the fact that Kurds have no place in Turkish state thinking. This applies to the traditional Kemalist mentality and also to the nationalist-religious Erdogan/Bahçeli alliance.

Therefore, it is a priority task to overthrow this government, which has been carrying out and institutionalising genocide in Kurdistan for 20 years, massacring Kurds with chemicals and trying to recruit Kurdish youth as informers and use them for prostitution and drug trafficking.

One should not be under the illusion that the government that will replace them will settle the Kurdish question with democratic methods, recognise the language, culture and existence of the Kurds and allow them to govern themselves. In the reality of Kurdistan, all this can only be made possible through an organised and conscious social struggle.

The parliament is only one position among many for the Kurds and the struggle for democracy. Its role and task must not be underestimated or overestimated, and it must not be compared with other positions. The strength of each position facilitates the work of the other positions and strengthens their hand.

In this regard, one should not be deceived by those who lament about ministries or other posts in the name of the Kurds. For they only know the status of posts and offices. As Kurdish elites, they have not paid a price and they are the ones who want to benefit from the tribute paid by the people.

The benchmark for the Kurds is how to deal with Abdullah Öcalan. Punishing those who take Öcalan's breath away is the most important task. During the elections, we can teach them a lesson together. Moreover, we should not spare a second for those who want to turn our heads and act as stooges of the AKP/MHP. It must be realised that they are even more dangerous and ugly than the current government.

To frustrate these groups is also to thwart the Turkish state's historic game of using Kurds against Kurds. Therein lies the historicity of the election for the Kurds. In this election, the Kurds must teach a lesson to both genocides and their petty-bourgeois lackeys and traitor networks.

Who Are We?

The International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan” was founded in March 1999, a month after Öcalan’s abduction from Kenya and his imprisonment by Turkey. Since its initial foundation, the International Initiative struggled for Abdullah Öcalan’s release from prison so that he can play his rightful role in the establishment of a just peace between the Turkish state and Kurdistan’s Workers Party (PKK). The International Initiative also aimed at contributing to the repairing of the ties between the Kurdish and Turkish peoples, as well as all other peoples of the Middle Eastern regions.

In order to achieve its aims, the International Initiative followed several related paths. Influencing international and national audiences through international campaigns to interfere with Turkish state’s policies towards Abdullah Öcalan has been one of these paths. A second area of work the International Initiative committed itself is the dissemination of Öcalan’s views through art, publications and conferences. Finally, the International Initiative has also been active in raising awareness for Öcalan’s conditions and the human rights violations he faces through reports, fact-finding delegations and lobbying.

Campaigns

The International Initiative organizes signature campaigns to influence the policies towards Öcalan. One such campaign which was launched in 2012 by one thousand preliminary signatories including Gerry Adams, Prof. Antonio Negri, Prof. Immanuel Wallerstein, Prof. Achin Vanaik, and other intellectuals, politicians, MPs, and NGOs from South America, Europe, Asia, Russia, and the Middle East. The campaign reached 10,328,623 signatures and may be the biggest signature campaign for the freedom of a political prisoner that the world has ever seen. It significantly challenged the isolation that was enforced on Öcalan and possibly paved the ways for the peace talks that the Turkish state and Öcalan led between 2013 and 2015.

The International Initiative also organizes video campaigns that educate the public on Öcalan’s life-story, his prison conditions and the demands for his freedom.

Publications

The International Initiative translates, edits and publishes books written by Öcalan in different languages including in English, German, French, Spanish and Arabic.

It compiles brochures from his works on specific topics, such as democratic confederalism or women’s freedom.

It edits books on Öcalan that discuss his main ideas.

The International Initiative also publishes regular reports on Öcalan’s prison conditions and his isolation.

Conferences

The International Initiative organizes biannual conferences and invites scholars, activists, students and politicians to discuss Öcalan’s ideas in order to initiate a conversation between different Movements around the world.

Delegations

Every year on February 15th, which is the date of the abduction of Abdullah Öcalan, the International Initiative organizes a group of internationally acclaimed people to take a trip to Turkey for a fact finding mission and publicizes their findings.

Lobbying

The International Initiative lobbies in the European Council, CPT and other international organizations against the human rights violations against Abdullah Öcalan and his total isolation in İmralı prison.

Art for Öcalan

This campaign aims to express the relationship between Abdullah Öcalan, Kurdish people, freedom and women’s freedom and to educate the wider public on the past and present of the Kurdish people. The International Initiative has already collected art from Brazil, South Africa, USA, South America, Italy, Germany as well as Kurds from different parts of Kurdistan. These works have been printed in postcards, t-shirts and canvas and made available for solidarity sale.

Contact e-mail: imralipost@freecocalan.org

Websites: freecocalan.org | ocalanbooks.com || Videos: vimeo.com/freecocalan