



International Initiative

Postbox 10 05 11 • D-50445 Cologne
Tel: +49-221-130 15 59 • Fax: +49-221-790 76 10 30
www.freeocalan.org • info@freedom-for-ocalan.com

"Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan – Peace in Kurdistan"

Press statement

The centennial truth of the Turkish state: Colonial Fascism

Statement on the 24th anniversary of Abdullah Öcalan's abduction

To the massive loss, pain and anger that the biggest earthquake in Kurdistan in a century caused, another pain is added these days: the 24th anniversary of Abdullah Öcalan's abduction and imprisonment under isolation conditions. Just as the Turkish state intends to leave him to die on an island prison, it leaves to die tens of thousands of people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds under the rubble of the recent earthquake. This autumn, the same state is going to celebrate 100 years of its own existence—100 years of forced assimilation, massacres and cultural genocide.

The recent earthquake with its epicenter in Kurdistan is telling of this centennial republic. It is not just the earthquake that killed such a huge number of families, men, women and children, but the lack of any Turkish government action following the earthquake. Many were buried under the rubble alive waiting for rescue that the state never intended. Others who were alive lived to see that apart from solidarity and aid organized by fellow community members, they were left by the state to die under the cold winter conditions. Rescue teams from around the world were denied the possibility to save people, most were forced to leave or stop work. Children were taken away without permission from their families or next of kin.

The dimensions and the effects of the earthquake cannot yet be understood, but this will have huge consequences politically and socially. Any sincere attempt to extend condolences to these communities requires that truth be told. However, one thing is quite clear: We are witnessing how the centennial republic is using this "opportunity" of the earthquake to ethnically cleanse this area from its indigenous peoples who have been resisting the centennial policies of denial and genocide; Armenians, Assyrians, Kurds, Alevis, Nusayris, Jews, women as well as other ethnic and religious communities between Hatay, Adıyaman and Maraş.

However, in the year of its 100th anniversary, the republic is weaker than ever. The AKP version of the republic is the worst possible combination of colonialism, neocolonialism, neoliberalism and fascism. Hence the earthquake is highly symbolic: like the houses being built upon unsafe foundations that crumbled, the republic is built upon the genocide and assimilation of many communities and beliefs.

On 15 February 1999, a new phase in the war against the Kurds and other communities raised its head with the NATO led abduction of Kurdish people's

First Signatories (1999)

Mairead Corrigan-Maguire (Nobel Peace Prize, Ireland),
Dario Fo (Nobel Prize in Literature, Italy), **Adolfo Perez Esquivel** (Nobel Peace Prize, Argentina), **José Ramos-Horta** (Nobel Peace Prize, East Timor), **José Saramago** (Nobel Prize in Literature, Portugal), **Danielle Mitterrand** (Foundation France Liberté, France), **Ramsey Clark** (form. Attorney General, USA), **Uri Avnery** (Gush Shalom, Israel), **Noam Chomsky** (Linguist, Publicist, MIT, USA), **Alain Lipietz** (MEP, France), **Pedro Marset Campos** (MEP, Spain), **Lord Eric Aveybury** (House of Lords, UK), **Harry Cohen** (MP Labour, UK), **Cynog Dafis** (MP Plaid Cymru, Wales, UK), **Lord Raymond Hylton** (House of Lords, UK), **Lord John Nicholas Rea** (House of Lords, UK), **Walid Jumblatt** (Leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, Lebanon), **Rudi Vis** (MP Labour, UK), **Paul Flynn** (MP Labour, UK), **Máiréad Keane** (Sinn Féin, Northern Ireland), **Domenico Gallo** (form. Senator, Italy), **Livio Pepino** (Magistratura Democratica, Italien), **Xabier Arzalluz** (President PNV, Spain), **Tony Benn** (MP Labour, UK), **Alain Calles** (President MRAP, France), **Gianna Nannini** (Singer-songwriter, Italy), **Geraldine Chaplin** (Actress, Spain), **David MacDowall** (Writer, UK), **Dietrich Kittner** (Cabaret artist, Germany), **Alice Walker** (Writer, USA), **Franca Rame** (Writer and actress, Italy), **Chris Kutschera** (Writer, France), **Prof. Dr. Jean Ziegler** (MP and Publicist, Switzerland), **Prof. Dr. Angela Davis** (University of California, Santa Cruz, USA), **Prof. Dr. Norman Paech** (International Law, Germany), **Prof. Dr. Werner Ruf** (International Law, Germany), **Prof. Dr. Gerhard Stuby** (International Law, Germany), **Hans Branscheidt** (medico international, Germany)

leader Abdullah Öcalan from Nairobi, Kenya. A series of actors in Europe and in the Middle East as well as the US were behind this operation. Ever since, the special warfare against the Kurds has changed. In the past it was mainly old ways of using violence and oppression and extrajudicial killings. Today the state has resorted to classical occupation of other parts of Kurdistan, and neocolonialism in places of former Ottoman rule. It is terrorizing Kurdish people in other parts of Kurdistan using drones, using refugees against its own population and against Europe as a war strategy, imprisoning huge numbers of peoples, using chemical weapons, assassinating Kurdish politicians in Europe, leaving people to die whether in the basements that they bombarded during the days of local governance resistance of the Kurds or under the rubble like in this earthquake.

The regime of lawlessness around Abdullah Öcalan that became "law" with the explicit approval of the Council of Europe and its organs is now being implemented against the peoples in Turkey without any shame or morality. The aggravated life sentence given to Abdullah Öcalan—in effect a death sentence spread over time—and the situation of total incommunicado of the last 24 years has been woven step by step around the Kurdish peoples and other communities who have been turned into minorities.

When Abdullah Öcalan was handed over to Turkish state on 15 February 1999, he was well aware that what was happening to him mirrored what was in store for the Kurdish people. At the time Öcalan stated: "They are burying me alive here." In return for political gains the Turkish state has been allowed to bury Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdish and all the oppressed people alive. The policies implemented on the island prison where he is held and the policies against Kurdish peoples and other communities are one and the same. The state condemns the victims of the earthquake in Kurdistan to death by intentional neglect, just as it has condemned Abdullah Öcalan to die in İmralı Island—first by hanging, now by total and forever isolation.

The US and Europe, who led this operation against the Kurdish people's leader, continue to legitimize the colonization and occupation of Kurdistan and condemn any resistance to it as terrorism, and are the ones that brewed this genocidal fascist regime. This is because the Turkish state paves the path for them to further ecocide, genocide, capitalism and colonialism in the region. The indigenous peoples' existence is a resistance to these. And this makes perfect sense according to the political thought of Abdullah Öcalan, one of the great thinkers of the 21st century: The main conflict since the foundation of patriarchal, state-based civilization has been one between this civilization and the democratic civilization represented by the communities that are outside this state-based civilization. It is past time that a united struggle is waged, otherwise our planet will be destroyed beyond recovery, bit by bit through societycide, genocide and ecocide.

And this certainly is not our fate, nor will these policies necessarily be successful. To quote Abdullah Öcalan: "What is built by the human hand can be changed by the human hand." Already, beneath the rubble blossoms hope that needs to be nurtured: solidarity, enlightenment and the need to be organized to build life anew—a free life.

In his historical defense speech in 1999 Öcalan emphasized the need to turn the Republic of Turkey into a democratic republic. When the massive earthquake in the west of Turkey happened the same year, Öcalan and the PKK sped up the withdrawal of the PKK forces from Turkey. Peace seemed to be a real possibility. Today, the PKK has yet again silenced the weapons. However, now, after the even bigger earthquake in Kurdistan, the Turkish state once again ignores the possibility to build peace and a common future. Instead, it kills in the disaster area, it kills abroad, it kills in the prisons. The greatest relief—apart from immediate disaster relief—would be peace in Turkey and Kurdistan. Öcalan has worked for this peace relentlessly for decades now. The time has come for his freedom.

Therefore, on this 24th anniversary of Abdullah Öcalan's abduction, we renew our call: "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan!"

International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan"

Cologne, 14 February 2023