

THE İMRALI POST

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Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

Human Rights Association urges immediate meeting with Öcalan

ANF | ANKARA | 10 DECEMBER 2022

The Human Rights Association (İHD) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) held a joint press conference at the İHD Headquarters to mark the 74th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Human Rights Week. A report on human rights violations in Turkey in 2022 was released during the press conference.

Data from the report

The report said that, according to the data of the Ministry of Justice, the number of detainees and convicts has increased from 55,870 in 2005 to 336,315 as of December 1, 2022. According to the report, the number of prisoners has increased nearly sixfold in 17 years.

The report revealed that at least, 6019 people lost their lives, and 8562 people were injured due to the armed conflicts between 2015 and 2021. Moreover, 1 person was killed and 20 others were injured as a result of racist attacks against the Kurds in 2022.

'State of emergency becomes permanent'

Türkdoğan emphasized that there has been a permanent state of emergency in the country since 2016. Türkdoğan said: "Turkey is governed by an authoritarian presidency under one-man rule. We are fighting for human rights under authoritarian rule."

İmralı isolation

Türkdoğan remarked: "Isolation is against human dignity. The isolation in the İmralı prison needs to be lifted as soon as possible and Öcalan's family and lawyers should meet him immediately.

Fincancı's arrest

Türkdoğan said: "The arrest of Korur Fincancı is unacceptable. What needed to be done was not the arrest of Şebnem, but the necessary investigations. We will go to Istanbul on December 23, and we will free our friend Şebnem."

Right to assembly and demonstration

Türkdoğan added: “The Saturday Mothers were again not allowed to stage a sit-in in Galatasaray Square. Women, LGBTI+s, Saturday Mothers, peace and human rights defenders, students, environmentalists, workers and laborers, HDP members who want to enjoy their right to assembly and demonstration, guaranteed by the Constitution, have faced the cruel and shameful violence of law enforcement.”

Kurdish question

Türkdoğan underlined that “the most important problem in our country is the Kurdish problem”: “The crackdown on political parties continues. The HDP is facing a closure case. The Kurdish question remains as one of the main obstacles to Turkey's democratization. As rights defenders, we have always advocated a democratic, peaceful and just solution to the Kurdish issue. We keep saying that democracy and human rights can be protected by bringing peace to these lands.”

Arrest of journalists

Türkdoğan said that they did not accept the detention of 9 journalists in the past months: “Journalists should not be in prisons. We will continue to defend the values of democracy. I would like to express that if we want to create an alternative for human rights in the upcoming elections, it is necessary for all social opposition to cooperate. If this happens, the peoples of Turkey will have a future in favor of democracy.”

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Kurdish activists conclude sit-in outside the CPT with a call for urgent action for Öcalan

ANF | STRASBOURG | 10 DECEMBER 2022

The sit-in action initiated by the Congress of Kurdish Democratic Society in Europe (KCKD-E) in front of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) in Strasbourg ended on Friday with an unequivocal demand: the body should acknowledge its responsibility and act swiftly to ensure the enforcement of a contact with Abdullah Öcalan on the Turkish prison island of İmralı.

“The Kurdish people are losing their patience. Ignoring the isolation and torture Öcalan is being subjected to is an unacceptable provocation. We demand to hear from the leader,” said Tahir Köçer of the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK).

The three-day protest action in front of the CPT started on Wednesday. Since the Asrin Law Office, which legally represents the İmralı prisoners, stated at the end of November that the CPT probably had no personal contact with Öcalan during its last visit to Turkey in September, concern for the 73-year-old's life and safety has increased. Kurdish organizations are demanding clarification about the visit to İmralı and

information about Öcalan's condition. There has been no sign of life from the PKK founder and his three fellow prisoners, Ömer Hayri Konar, Hamili Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş, since March 2021. The last lawyer visit took place in 2019.

“Since the day Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan was taken from Kenya to Turkey in an act of piracy that violated international law, he has been subjected to isolation unprecedented in history,” Köçer said.

“It is no secret that this has been the common practice in Öcalan's case for years,” Köçer continued. He added that the CPT is also aware of this. “Our only demand to the body is: fulfill duties and to this end take measures that best meet its own responsibility. That is all we want.”

Köçer appealed to the Kurdish public to continue uninterrupted activities for Öcalan's freedom. “Only resistance leads to victory,” the politician said.



Turkish police detains two people in protests against Öcalan's isolation

MEDYANEWS – DIYARBAKIR | 11 DECEMBER 2022

Turkish police detained two people in the south-eastern province of Diyarbakır (Amed) on Sunday during a protest demanding an end to the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

During the protest, numerous non-governmental organizations emphasized that Öcalan is the key to the solution to the Kurdish issue.

“We want Öcalan's family and lawyers to visit him. We don't want anything special. We want what Turkish laws require for prisoners. Mr Öcalan has the right to have visitors,” Ömer Öcalan from Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) said.

The police attacked the group gathered for the protest, and raised their shields to prevent journalists from taking images during the statements of the NGOs.

The PKK leader, one of four inmates at İmralı prison, has been living under strict isolation for a number of years. Öcalan met with his lawyers for the last time in 2019 and since then the Turkish authorities have declined the lawyers' repeated applications to meet with their client. His brother Mehmet Öcalan, who had a five-minute telephone conversation with him in March 2021, was the last person to have any contact with him from outside.

Kurdish people have been campaigning, organizing protests and calling for an end the isolation imposed on Öcalan for years. In recent weeks members of the PKK Executive Council have been urging Kurdish

people to intensify such protests, as concerns about Öcalan's health and safety have increased after representatives of a delegation of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) failed to clarify whether they met the PKK leader face-to-face during an inspection visit to İmralı prison, in September.

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Residents of Maxmur Refugee Camp start period of actions for Abdullah Öcalan

ANF | MAXMUR | 11 DECEMBER 2022

Refugees living in Maxmur Camp started a period of actions to demand the end of the isolation imposed on Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan.

The actions will be carried out with the slogan "Yesterday has passed, tomorrow will be late, we will break the isolation today".

İshtar Assembly Coordination member Xurbet İşlek said that the actions will continue until Öcalan's physical freedom is achieved.

İşlek added: "We declare to the whole world that we will not spend another day or minute without living a free life with our leadership. For this reason, we are announcing that we, as the people of Maxmur camp, have started our period of action. Because Leader Öcalan is the will, existence and freedom of the Kurdish people. For this reason, all Kurdish people, wherever they are, should take action for Leader Öcalan."

İşlek continued: "Leader Öcalan is our red line, and he has been in heavy isolation for 24 years. We, as the people of the camp and the Kurdish people, do not accept this. We are worried about the increasing dangers posed to the life of Leader Öcalan. That's why Öcalan's family and lawyers should hold a visit as soon as possible so that we can breathe a sigh of relief. We will take action here every day at 2pm in order to break the isolation. In our action program, seminars, analysis of the leader paradigm, screenings will take place."

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Kurds in Lausanne protest isolation imposed on Öcalan

ANF | LAUSANNE | 11 DECEMBER 2022

The Lausanne Democratic Kurdish Community Center and the Lajin Women's Council organized an action in St Laurent Square.

The statement made at the demonstration said that the Kurdish people will continue to be in the squares in order to learn about the safety and life of Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan as soon as possible and to see a visit with his lawyers ensured without any preconditions.

The statement also pointed out that the Turkish state used Abdullah Öcalan's security and life as a threat and attacked Kurdistan, especially the Medya Defense Areas and civilian living areas.



Police block demonstration against the isolation of Öcalan in Amed

ANF | AMED | 11 DECEMBER 2022

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK), Free Women's Movement (TJA), DBP (Democratic Regions Party), HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party), Solidarity Federation with Relatives of Prisoners (MED TUHAD-FED), Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) and the Peace Mothers' Council are staging a protest demonstration in Amed (tr. Diyarbakir) today against the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan and the Turkish government's war policy.

The police are on the scene with a large contingent and are sealing off the streets around the central Koşuyolu Park. Several groups of demonstrators were surrounded by security forces, including MPs from the HDP and the DBP.

While the police continue to try to prevent a large crowd from gathering together, the demonstrators protest against the blockade and shout the slogan "Bijî berxwedana zindanan" (Long live the prison resistance). Relatives of prisoners, including Nazime Boltan, the mother of the seriously ill Civan Boltan, said that their only demand is justice. "We are here today to end injustice in Turkey," said another relative.

Yesterday, when politicians and activists were prevented from inviting people to participate in today's demonstration, DBP chairperson Saliha Aydeniz said: "We wanted to visit traders today, but we were stopped by thousands of security forces. Actually, this is exactly what we mean when we talk about isolation. It is an anti-democratic action and proof of total disregard for human rights. The fact that even a visit to traders scares the state so much shows its helplessness. We will continue to fight against this fascism always and everywhere and be on the streets every day."

In Europe, too, protests by Kurdish people have been taking place on a daily basis for days. Countless people are demanding clarity about the situation of Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK founder who has been imprisoned on the Turkish prison island of Imralı since 1999. The protests are prompted by the complete silence surrounding the 73-year-old and the demand that the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) ensure contact with him and his fellow prisoners.

Since the Asrin Law Office stated at the end of November that the CPT probably had no personal contact with Öcalan during its last visit to Turkey, in September, concern for the life and safety of the Kurdish leader has increased. Kurdish society is demanding clarification about the CPT's visit to Imrali and information about the condition of the prisoners.

Abdullah Öcalan is considered a key figure for a political solution to the Kurdish question and a democratization of Turkey. The Turkish state is investing a huge proportion of its budget in the war in Kurdistan, while the population is suffering from a severe economic crisis. At the same time, more and more political prisoners are dying in Turkey, and mothers are fighting for the lives of their children with peaceful methods.



People in Kobanê protest against the isolation of Öcalan

ANF | KOBANE | 11 DECEMBER 2022

Out of concern for the safety of Abdullah Öcalan on the Turkish prison island of Imrali, numerous people took to the streets in the canton of Kobanê on Sunday, despite attacks by the Turkish state on the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria. The Euphrates section of the Young Women's Association called for the demonstration under the slogan "With the spirit of the revolutionary people's war, we will succeed in liberating Öcalan".

The protest march started in front of the People's Commune in the eastern district of Şêran. Mothers of young activists carrying a huge banner with the portrait of Öcalan on a yellow background walked in the front. The image of the Kurdish leader also looked out at the crowd from numerous flags. The chant "Bê Serok Jiyan nabe" [No life without the leader]—could be heard loudly again and again.

The demonstration culminated in a rally at the headquarters of the Council of Families of Martyrs. Politician Fatme Osman, co-chair of the PYD for the Euphrates region, spoke about the inhumane prison conditions of Öcalan as well as on the political significance of the isolation torture.

The isolation regime on Imrali clearly violates national and international law and violates international agreements and treaties. This is well known. That the Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and other institutions established to uphold human rights nevertheless fail to act to finally end the injustice on Imrali is therefore more than condemnable. We despise this double standard in dealing with Öcalan and the Kurdish people. The isolation of Rêber Apo prevents a sustainable social peace in Turkey and beyond. For Öcalan, in particular, has proven time and again in the past, despite his inhumane imprisonment, that he is an important player in building such peace. We demand that relevant international organizations act in accordance with their duties and enforce contact with him. Only an Öcalan with contact with the outside world could pave the way for peace and create an atmosphere in which the Kurdistan question would be resolved in a democratic way. This would not only end the war in Rojava.

Osman recalled that Öcalan used his submissions to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to outline a new grassroots democratic, gender-free and ecological paradigm. “His ideas do not only represent hope for a democratic life; they are currently being implemented in Northern and Eastern Syria. This is the main reason why our regions are under attack. But Öcalan is more than a social theorist. He is and remains the most important political representative of the Kurds. His support among the Kurdish population as well as within other societies is unbroken. The continuing isolation on Imrali must therefore also be assessed as an expression of the Turkish state’s anti- Kurdish war policy.”

“Centuries ago, the Kurdish people had to defend themselves against those who considered them enemies. This mentality of the aggressors has remained the same until today. Their aim is to destroy Kurdish existence. But we have changed. We are no longer the Kurds of yesterday. We have a democratic project that we are ready to fight to preserve.”

Osman was also critical of the “West’s” ignorance in the face of Turkey’s political campaigns of destruction in its own country, directed against Kurdish politicians, and the use of chemical weapons against guerrillas in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. “All these instruments are being used to completely isolate our people. Therefore, we call on our people to raise the resistance against the oppression of the fascist Turkish regime to a new level. The freedom of Öcalan also means our freedom. The isolation on Imrali must be broken.”



Several detained as police attack demo against isolation in Van

ANF | VAN | 12 DECEMBER 2022

Kurdish people are demanding clarity about the situation of Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK founder who has been imprisoned on the Turkish prison island of Imrali since 1999. The protests are prompted by the complete silence surrounding the 73-year-old and the demand that the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) ensure contact with him and his fellow prisoners.

Since the Asrin Law Office stated at the end of November that the CPT probably had no personal contact with Öcalan during its last visit to Turkey in September, concern for the life and safety of the Kurdish leader has increased. Kurdish society is demanding clarification about the CPT’s visit to Imrali and information about the condition of the prisoners.

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK), Free Women’s Movement (TJA), Democratic Regions Party (DBP), Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), MED Legal and Solidarity Associations with Families of Prisoners and Convicts (MED TUHAD-FED), Lawyers’ Association for Freedom (ÖHD) and the Peace Mothers Council took to the streets in Van province on Monday for a mass demonstration against the isolation regime imposed on Öcalan.

The police tightened security measures outside the HDP, DBP and all other institutions and closed the entrances and exits of all streets in the city center to prevent gathering. The crowd reacted to the heavy blockade by chanting the slogan “Bijî berxwedana zindanan” [Long Live the Prison Resistance].

The police crackdown with tear gas and rubber bullets resulted in the detention of several demonstrators.

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Turkey CPT relation is political, says European Lawyer

MEDYANEWS – 13 DECEMBER 2022

European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH) co-chair Barbara Spinelli said that the isolation against Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan is the biggest prisoner human rights violation committed in the last century.

Spinelli spoke about the recent visit of European Convention for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) in September 2022 to İmralı Island where Öcalan is imprisoned and the uncertainty on whether CPT met face to face with Öcalan.

The lawyer said that CPT bylaws should be changed in order for the committee to be able to be transparent about the outcome of the visit.

“If the Turkish government allow it, CPT can enter into detail about the findings of the delegation, so we must push the Turkish government to give transparency to allow CPT to talk now -not after some years- about the delegation’s findings,” she said.

Shortly before the CPT’s latest visit to the prison was announced, ELDH had called on the Committee to revisit İmralı Prison. “It will be very difficult for the Turkish government to ignore such a global demand,” ELDH’s co-chair had said.

“No-one knows if Mr Öcalan is alive, and this is extremely worrying,” said Spinelli. Öcalan’s lawyers, Asrın Law Office, had stated that following the delegation’s visit to İmralı, CPT did not provide the slightest information about the conditions of their client.

“CPT did all that they can do base on their mission and based on committee rules. At the end of every delegation, they prepare reports that are very strong against Turkey, with very exact obligations and recommendations to Turkey on what to do to improve the situation in İmralı. The problem is that Turkey is not complying with these international obligations or with CPT’s recommendations,” lawyer Spinelli said.

“In the history books Öcalan’s isolation will be seen as the greatest human rights violation of a prisoner in the last century,” she added, saying that the persecution of the Kurdish leader is part of Turkey’s genocidal policy against the Kurds.

As a human rights activist and lawyer, Spinelli has been an observer at many trials in Turkey including Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) cases and trials against Öcalan’s lawyers. She was also an electoral observer for the Turkish elections in 2015.

Previously, lawyers from 22 countries issued a statement condemning Turkey's prosecution of those who demanded an investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons against Kurdish fighters in its cross-border military operations and called on the Turkish government release activists and civil society figures detained in relation.

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Prisons in Turkey

Ill prisoner Tahir Gürdal murdered by prison system

ANF | AMED | 10 DECEMBER 2022

Tahir Gürdal (53), who caught lung cancer after entering the prison and was held in handcuffs for days in Gazi Yaşargil Training and Research Hospital, died 13 days after his sentence was suspended.

Seriously ill Gürdal (53), who had been imprisoned in Van F Type High Security Prison for nearly 10 years, was transferred to Diyarbakır High Security Prison No. 1 to be treated. Gürdal was released while in the hospital, where he was kept handcuffed for days, on Monday, 28 November, with a postponement of his sentence.

Speaking to the Mesopotamia Agency while Gürdal was receiving treatment, Birhat Gürdal said: "My father did not have any disease before, he fell ill after entering prison."

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15 years in prison sought for Kurdish female politician tortured by the police with dogs

ANF | VAN | 10 DECEMBER 2022

In the trial against Kurdish politician and activist Sevil Rojbin Çetin, the prosecution demanded a prison sentence of 15 years before the 2nd Heavy Penal Court in Van. Contrary to the 43-year-old's claim, she had been involved "in a terrorist manner", the prosecutor said in his plea on Thursday. Çetin is accused of being a member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The Kurdish woman rejects the accusations and sees the trial as part of the Turkish state's political campaign of destruction against Kurdish communal politics and the women's freedom movement. The indictment is essentially based only on the statements of anonymous witnesses.

Sevil Rojbin Çetin is an activist of the Free Women's Movement (Tevgera Jinên Azad, TJA) and at the same time a member of the local politics committee of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). In June 2020, she was attacked in her flat in Amed (tr. Diyarbakir) by masked special units of the Turkish police. Before Çetin was arrested, she suffered a torture procedure lasting around three and a half hours, in which eleven officers are said to have been involved. They first set two dogs on Çetin, causing severe bite wounds to her legs. Then she was pinned to the ground by police officers who held a gun to her head and beat and kicked her. At the end of the ordeal, Çetin was stripped half-naked and photographed. The Kurdish woman, who suffers from uterine cancer, had to spend almost two weeks in police custody before a court ordered her to be remanded in custody. She is currently being held in the Diyarbakır women's prison.

Çetin's defense team believes that the arrest of the politician was prepared long in advance. The trial goes back to investigations that took place long before her arrest, they said at the last hearing. Çetin is not in prison for the first time. In March 2014, she was elected district mayor of the Edremit district in Van in local elections. Only two and a half years later, she was removed from office and imprisoned, along with about a hundred other mayors in the Kurdish southeast. At the time, Çetin was behind bars for around fourteen months, also on so-called terror charges related to the resistance for self-government in Northern Kurdistan. In 2019, she was imprisoned a second time, this time for activities for the Democratic Free Women's Movement (DÖKH). The proceedings initiated by the public prosecutor's office in Mardin have been combined with the trial in Van for a joint hearing and decision. The verdict is expected on 24 January 2023.



Yoleri: Isolation in detention is becoming more and more dramatic

ZEYNEP KURAY | ISTANBUL | 13 DECEMBER 2022

The situation of sick prisoners in Turkey is dramatic. Time and again, prisoners come out of prison in coffins at best. Most recently, Tahir Güldal, a political prisoner suffering from cancer, died on 9 December, 13 days after the end of his sentence. Güldal had previously been chained to a bed in hospital. For many prisoners, release is repeatedly postponed after the end of the regular prison term. One of the reasons for this is a remorse law that requires prisoners to confess to the offenses they are accused of. With this regulation, political prisoners in particular are hit hard.

“Isolation is the cause of the increase of diseases in prison”

Gülşen Yoleri, co-chair of the Human Rights Association (IHD) Istanbul office and initiator of the so-called “F-sessions”, a protest action to draw attention to the situation of sick prisoners every Saturday at Taksim Square, demands an urgent solution regarding the dramatic situation in prisons.

The list of seriously ill prisoners is getting longer and longer, Yoleri explained, pointing to the poor prison conditions and especially the intensification of isolation as the cause. The F-type prisons play an important

role in this. This change began on İmralı, said the human rights activist and continued: “When we studied the effects of the isolation system on prisoners as IHD even before the F-type prisons were built, we found that isolation is used as a method of torture in the prisons, and it causes both physical and psychological deterioration in the prisoners. We saw that isolation mainly causes psychosomatic disorders, which translates physically into serious diseases such as cancer and ulcers.”

Solidarity helps prisoners – isolation should break solidarity

Yoleri warned that in addition to isolation in prisons, malnutrition, inadequate ventilation and hygiene, lack of access to clean water and stress led to the rapid progression of diseases. “The only factor that has a positive effect on these diseases is solidarity. There are fewer diseases in shared rooms than in isolation. Isolation is directed precisely against this solidarity. The IHD representative went on to describe that prisoners are repeatedly denied medication, that they are not admitted to hospitals, and that if they are, even the examinations take place in handcuffs and thus become torture for the prisoners.”

“Isolation is getting worse and worse”

Yoleri also noted that, instead of abolishing solitary confinement torture, it is becoming more and more severe. She said that the new types of prisons, S and Y, are aggravated solitary confinement facilities that house prisoners with aggravated life sentences in particular. However, aggravated life sentences would already be imposed for freedom of expression, which could be classified as a “terrorist offense”. These prisons are therefore mainly occupied by political prisoners, she said.

Suspected deaths behind bars

Yoleri warned that isolation directly attacks the nature of humans as social beings and pointed to the many suspicious deaths in isolation cells: “For example, a person is arrested and the same day it is claimed that he or she committed suicide. These isolation conditions are precisely the reason why all these deaths have to be classified as suspicious. This is because there are no witnesses and the way the incidents occurred suggests a suspicion other than suicide - as in the case of Garibe Gezer. She said that she was being pressured and tortured, that they wanted to kill her and called for help. Isolation therefore leads to illness and death as a method of torture.”

“Procedure for suspension of execution must be changed”

Yoleri stressed that both the requirement of a report from the notorious Forensic Medicine Institute (ATK), as stipulated in Article 16 of the Enforcement Act, and the procedure for determining whether the person poses a security risk, are major obstacles for sick prisoners. She stated, “Even if the Forensic Medicine Institute determines incapacity, many sick prisoners are not released for security reasons. Abdullah Turan is one of the most drastic examples in this regard. Although he is paralyzed from the neck down and the ATK has issued an expert opinion stating that he cannot remain in prison, the suspension was prevented for a long time because the police and the public prosecutor’s office claimed that he posed a danger to society. So the issue here is not that Turan is a danger to society, but rather the openly hostile attitude of the police. If there is an illness and a certificate states that the prisoner is unfit to be detained, the execution must be suspended so that the prisoner can stay outside until he recovers.”

“We expect an immediate correction, not delaying tactics”

Yoleri recalled that Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ (AKP) had announced that a new regulation for sick prisoners would be created. She underlined that nothing has been done in this sense for three months. In the first eleven months of this year alone, 61 prisoners died, many of them under suspicious circumstances, Yoleri said and appealed to the Minister of Justice: “Keep your promise, we expect correction and not delaying tactics.”

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Condition of prisoners on hunger strike in Konya getting worse

ANF | KONYA | 15 DECEMBER 2022

The prisoners who started a 10-day indefinite alternating hunger strike on 4 October in Konya Ereğli High Security Prison, against rights violations and severe isolation conditions, turned it into indefinite and non-alternating hunger strikes on 16 November. The situation of the prisoners on hunger strike is getting worse and worse. In a phone call with his family, Mehmet Isiktas said: “The prison director prevents the inmates on hunger strike from meeting and talking with other prisoners, claiming that they are expanding the hunger strike by influencing others. They want to isolate us completely and prevent the hunger strike from being heard. Hear us now.”

‘Their situation is getting worse day by day’

In his meeting with his family, Isiktas noted that even greetings and speaking in Kurdish are prohibited, and said: “The inmates who are ill, have no hands or arms and cannot meet their basic needs on their own, yet they continue to be kept in single cells. The detainees, who were deported and brought from different prisons, are isolated by being placed in single cells. The situation of our friends, who have been on an indefinite and non-alternating hunger strike for about 30 days, is getting worse day by day. One of the prisoners in bad conditions is Remzi Akyürek. Something needs to be done as soon as possible. Our applications to the Ereğli Prison Administration regarding our requests to improve the harsh conditions of the prison are rejected. The number of people joining the hunger strike is increasing day by day. That’s why we continue the indefinite and irreversible hunger strike that we started against all these rights violations and severe isolation.”

— ★ —

Prisoners on hunger strike in Ereğli put in solitary confinement

ANF | KONYA | 16 DECEMBER 2022

The indefinite-alternating hunger strike launched by prisoners in the Konya Ereğli High Security Prison on October 4 to protest rights violations and severe isolation conditions was turned into an indefinite non-alternating hunger strike on November 16. It is reported that the prisoners on hunger strike have been put in solitary confinement cells.

Mehmet Can Yiger, one of the strikers, gave the following information in a phone call with his family:

“The health of fellow hunger strikers is gradually deteriorating. Our hunger strike to protest rights violations in the prison is growing stronger day by day. The prison forbids us to greet each other and speak Kurdish. They are trying to isolate us completely. They started to keep the prisoners on hunger strike on a separate floor. Furthermore, they have put the prisoners on hunger strike into solitary confinement cells. We can't see or hear anyone right now. The new cells were recently constructed, and they forced us to clean the new building and put us there. We are worried about isolation, and if anything happens to us, the prison will be responsible.”

— ★ —

Call for the release of Kurdish journalists jailed for six months without indictment

ANF | AMED | 16 DECEMBER 2022

The media landscape in Turkey was once considered diverse. After almost 20 years of Erdoğan's reign, hardly anything is left of it: Critical reporting is considered a minefield, at least 95 per cent of journalism has been brought into line. Only a few Kurdish and left-wing media institutions strive for independent reporting despite massive repression. This also explains why the regime keeps tightening the reins on them. More than 80 journalists are currently behind bars in Turkey. Most of them are media workers in the tradition of the free Kurdish press. They are at the center of repression in Turkey and are systematically subjected to terror trials in order to domesticate them.

The policy of “silencing” has been in place since the 1990s. An atmosphere of fear was created, where even extra-legal executions of Kurdish media workers whose reporting was outside the government's perspective were part of the agenda. The methods of repression may have changed - instead of forced disappearances from life, critical media workers are imprisoned for years. What has remained the same is the courage of the Kurdish media to stand up to the rulers despite everything and report on what is happening.

Blow against leading journalists

“Sixteen of these courageous people dedicated to the Kurdish press have now been in prison without charge for six months to the day” - said the co-chair of the Dicle-Fırat Journalists’ Association (DFG), Dicle Müftüoğlu, at a rally in the Kurdish metropolis of Amed (tr. Diyarbakir) on Friday. The gathering, which took place in front of the Palace of Justice, was supported by the Mezopotamya Women Journalists’ Platform (MKGP) as well as political and civil society groups active in the region. The arrested journalists in question are the director of the women's news agency JinNews, Safiye Alagaş, the co-chair of DFG, Serdar Altan, the editor of the news agency MA, Aziz Oruç, the two editors of the Kurdish-language newspaper Xwebûn, Mehmet Ali Ertaş and Zeynel Abidin Bulut, the presenter and former MA editor Ömer Çelik, the presenters Neşe Toprak and Elif Üngür, the cameramen Mazlum Doğan Güler, Ibrahim Koyuncu, Abdurrahman Öncü, Suat Doğuhan, Ramazan Geciken, Lezgin Akdeniz and Mehmet Şahin, as well as Remziye Temel, accountant of Piya Production.

Still no indictment

The journalists are all being held in two high-security prisons in Amed, charged with “membership of a terrorist organization”. As political prisoners, they are also subject to particularly severe prison conditions. The Turkish authorities consider their involvement with Kurdish media as “press work” for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). Nevertheless, there is still no indictment against them.

“The free press does not bend”

Speaking at the rally, Dicle Müftüoğlu, an editor for MA, stated: “There is no evidence of alleged crimes. The legal action against our colleagues is pure arbitrariness, the accusations are contrived and their arrest is politically motivated. In countries where there is no freedom of expression, media workers are the biggest risk group anyway. Therefore, under a regime led by the AKP-MHP coalition, it has become the norm to turn critical reporting into terrorism in order to silence the media. However, freedom of thought and expression are the basis of journalism. Since it is mainly the Kurdish media that report oppositional, they are also the most affected by repression.”

The DFG chairwoman stood in front of a banner with the inscription “The free press does not bend”, on which the photos of a total of 26 imprisoned journalists were also displayed. After the first repressive strike in June, ten more Kurdish media workers were arrested on terror charges at the end of October.

“Attack on freedom of expression and press”

Müftüoğlu called the operation against her colleagues an “attack on freedom of expression and freedom of the press” and called on the Turkish judiciary to immediately release the arrested journalists. She added: “The Kurdish press will continue to follow the path paved by pioneers like Musa Anter and Gurbetelli Er-söz. We will not be deterred. Freedom for journalism.”

Türkdoğan: There are 1,600 ill prisoners in jails

ANF | ANKARA | 17 DECEMBER 2022

Violations of rights in prisons have recently reached dimensions that threaten the fundamental right to life. According to the data published on the official website of the Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Prisons, as of 1 December 2022, 336,315 people are being held in penal institutions well over the full capacity of 286,797. In fact, there are an extra 49,515 detainees in prisons. According to the Human Rights Association (IHD), the number of ill prisoners rose to 1,600. In one year, 76 detainees died in prisons, and many more died shortly after a late release.

IHD co-chair Öztürk Türkdoğan evaluated the extent of violations of rights in prisons, the possible solutions and the effects of the deepening isolation on İmralı Island.

17 ill prisoners in 2007, 1,600 in 2022

Türkdoğan emphasized that many health rights are violated as prisoners are being held in a closed and overcrowded environment. “As far as we could determine, in 2007, the number of ill prisoners was 17. In 2022, this number has reached 1,600. And we estimate that the real number is 3-4 times the number we were able to detect.”

At least 70 prisoners died in 2022

Stating that the number of detainees who lost their lives in 2022 exceeded 70 as far as could be determined, Türkdoğan said that violations of the right to health directly affect the violation of the right to life. He recalled the Ministry of Justice’s statement in August, and said: “The Minister stated that they would make a law change that would solve the issue of medical examination in handcuffs and ensure the release of ill prisoners. We expect the necessary steps to be taken as soon as possible so that more people do not lose their lives.”

Isolation in İmralı spread to other prisons

Türkdoğan said that the isolation practices implemented in İmralı Prison spread to all jails in the country and added: “Before the İmralı prison was established, the authorities carried out a trial in the early 90s. But this trial was abandoned as a result of the resistance carried out by the prisoners. This process started again in İmralı in 99. In the 2000s, F-type prisons were introduced, and this system was further expanded. New 'high security' prisons were built.”

Emphasizing the need to oppose isolation, Türkdoğan said: “If we do not object to the strict isolation imposed on Abdullah Öcalan because of his political identity, if we remain silent, this violation will continue to spread. If there are laws in this country, they should be enforced for everyone. If you don’t like the law, it should also be appealed. We demand that the laws be changed. If there is a place called İmralı prison in this country, if Abdullah Öcalan and other prisoners are kept there, why are they not allowed to be visited by their families and lawyers? This paves the way for arbitrary practices.”

The opposition should be worried

Emphasizing that the opposition in Turkey also adopts a discriminatory attitude, Türkdoğan said that above all, a humanitarian approach should be adopted when it comes to human rights and the rights of prisoners. “Let's assume that a CHP deputy is imprisoned and is not allowed to see anyone for a month. Hell will break loose in this country. Yet, it has not been possible to communicate with 4 citizens of this country for almost 2 years. Why are the opposition not worried about this situation? The isolation may seem like it is applied to a limited area, but it should be underlined how widespread the effects of this application are. At this point, with the high-type prison model, people will be taken to a room alone and will be deprived of many rights. This is where the system comes in. The way to object to this is through Imralı. Foremost, it is necessary to adopt a human approach.”

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Military aggression and occupation

Turkish attacks on North-East Syria continue

ANF | 10 DECEMBER 2022

The Turkish army and its jihadist mercenary troops are continuing the wave of attacks on the autonomous regions of northern and eastern Syria that began three weeks ago. On Saturday, numerous villages in the region were bombed again, and some villages suffered massive material damage. While villages from Afrin to Til Temir were targeted, there have been no reports of human casualties so far.

In the shattered canton of Afrin, the aggression was directed against the not fully occupied Sherawa district. A Turkish combat drone bombed the village of Eqîbê, about 20 kilometers south-east of central Afrin. The full extent of the damage is not yet known. Turkish reconnaissance drones are circling in the sky above the region and in the neighboring canton of Shehba.

Artillery strikes by the occupation forces targeted the villages of Cîşan, Koran and Merc Ismail in Kobanê. The area in the east of the canton borders the occupied Girê Spî (Tal Abyad) and is repeatedly attacked both from exit points of occupation and from Turkish territory.

In Til Temir, the aggression of the occupation forces is concentrated in the village of Tall al-Lubn, about 17 kilometers to the west of the town. According to reports from the front line between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Turkish jihadist troops, the attacks are being carried out with howitzers.

The village of Gozeliye in Til Temir region, the district of Ain Issa, the refugee camp on the outskirts of the district and the M4 highway were also attacked by the occupation forces today.

The region of Manbij was also targeted by the invaders. According to the Manbij Military Council (MMC), at least seven artillery shells hit the village of Saydiyah, which is located almost 20 kilometers northwest of the city center.

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HDP MP Özgüneş: 50 thousand village guards are involved in crime

ANF | ANKARA | 10 DECEMBER 2022

Speaking at the Parliamentary General Assembly about the Ministry of Interior budget for 2023, Hasan Özgüneş, a deputy of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), criticized the government for having “turned the country into a police and military state through policies of war.”

Remarking that the centenarian warmongering mentality has created a schizophrenic situation, Özgüneş said, “We cannot save today with this war budget and by taking killing as heroism. The incursions of Vienna, Egypt and Baghdad are left in the Middle Age, but some are still leading us back to those times. Not satisfied with the army and the police, they introduced the village guard system. They first named them as “village guards” and now call them “security guards” that could be deployed outside, whether Rojava or Southern Kurdistan. There are 57 thousand village guards in this country. And now, they are not content with that either, calling the retirees to join military operations. A guerrilla from the PKK and a village guard died in the same clash. You make a Kurd kill another.”

Özgüneş pointed out that village guards come to the fore with crimes of fraud, abduction of women, murder, abuse, drugs, weapon and ammunition smuggling, robbery of cattle, dwelling immunity, involvement in armed fighting and smuggling.

“50 thousand village guards are involved in crime. You produce crime machines. Then you talk about brotherhood and fellow citizenship. There can be no such a thing,” he added.

Özgüneş also criticized the police force for confronting people with the words “I am the State” in obstructing deputies and people during demonstrations.

“What kind of mentality is this? What kind of schizophrenic mindset is this? You crush society through any form of violence. As if that was not enough, you have turned life into a hell, not taking your hands off people's pockets. What needs to be done is to create a country where all folks, faiths and segments of society share a democratic, egalitarian and law-based life, and to allocate the budget to workers and people.”

Village-Guards: Armed collaborators

Village guards are paramilitary units used in Kurdistan against guerrillas and unwelcome opposition members. They consist of a considerable extent of tribal leaders, large landowners, families, and individuals who have often worked with the state for decades in an attempt to advocate for the state's interests in Kurdistan. Some of the village guards join this system voluntarily, while others are threatened with murder, arrest, and expulsion and become village guards under pressure. The Hamidiye regiments in the Ottoman Empire are considered the historical model of the Village Guards. Today's village guard system emerged in 1985, a year after the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) launched its armed struggle. At that time, the Turkish government under Turgut Özal began recruiting and arming Kurdish tribes and clans in the war against the PKK. Thousands of Kurdish villages that rejected the village guard system were burned and razed to the ground by the state in the 1990s.



Shehba Canton suspends education and municipal services because of Damascus embargo

ANF | SHEHBA | 11 DECEMBER 2022

The heavy embargo imposed by the Damascus government on Shehba Canton continues.

Damascus' government forces have not allowed food to pass between Aleppo-Shehba and Shehba-Manbij for two and a half months.

Afrin Region Education and Training Committee took a one-week break from school due to the fuel shortage.

The committee announced that the schools were suspended for one more week for the same reason.

Speaking to ANHA about the work of the public municipalities in Shehba, Afrin Region Local Administrations Committee Executive member Mihemed Elo said that the work of the municipalities in Shehba Canton has stopped due to the embargo and the lack of fuel.

Elo reported that the generators in the villages and towns of the canton have 15 days of fuel that can only run for 2 and a half hours a day.

Elo also said that the municipality limited its activities within the scope of providing drinking water to citizens and cleaning activities after one week. Elo urged international forces and legal organizations to pressure the government of Damascus to lift the embargo on the canton.



Yet another civilian killed by ongoing Turkish attacks in North-East Syria

ANF | 11 DECEMBER 2022

Turkey continues its attacks on the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria without interruption. According to their own statements, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) shot down a Turkish combat drone that was on an attack flight on Til Temir late on Saturday afternoon.

In the meantime, a civilian was killed in a Turkish attack in Ain Issa. According to information from the region, the victim was identified as 61-year-old Salih al-Selame.

On Saturday, a Syrian army soldier was reportedly killed in a Turkish attack on the village of Semoqa in Şehba canton. According to ANHA, more than 50 regime soldiers have been killed in Turkish attacks this year.

Since the beginning of the new wave of attacks on 19 November, infrastructure has also been deliberately destroyed and Turkey has used drones and artillery. In the village of Salok near Kobanê, a transmission tower belonging to Syriatel was attacked, and internet and telephone connections have been interrupted.

Human Rights Watch published an investigative report on the Turkish attacks on northern and eastern Syria on Wednesday. The human rights organization warns of an existential deterioration of the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in the region.

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YRK: Turkish drones attacked a village Southern Kurdistan

ANF | 11 DECEMBER 2022

The Defense Forces of Eastern Kurdistan (YRK) released a statement providing information about a latest Turkish drone attack on Iraqi territory on the border with Iran.

“The Turkish state is attacking the region on a daily basis to cover up its own defeat. On the evening of 9 December, when citizens were returning home from work, the Turkish occupying state bombed houses in the village of Sipiyyar twice,” the YRK said on Sunday.

The Turkish and Iranian regimes are acting together against the Kurdish people, said the YRK and continued: “Drones are constantly flying over the areas of Asos and Pêncwên. At every opportunity, our people, and our guerrillas are attacked. These attacks have caused great damage to civilians’ homes and gardens. The attacks show the helplessness of the Iranian state towards the ‘Jin Jiyan Azadî’ [Woman, Life, Freedom] revolution and of the Turkish state towards the resistance of the people and the guerrillas. Of course, we

will not give up our struggle because of these attacks. We will continue to struggle until a free and democratic life is possible.”

On 2 December, a civilian was killed in a Turkish air strike on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and at least two other people were injured, some seriously. The attack occurred in Şarbajêr north of the metropolis of Sulaymaniyah, and the village of Gelale was hit. While the Asos Mountains are repeatedly attacked by the Turkish army, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard have also carried out heavy attacks recently. Often, the attacks by both states took place in parallel. The Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) and its guerilla organization YRK are present in the region. At the end of October, three fighters were killed in a Turkish drone attack in Asos. In the course of the wave of attacks launched by the Turkish state on 19 November against the KRI and North-East Syria (AANES), the massif was also bombed several times.



Turkey continues shelling civilian settlements in North-East Syria

ANF | 11 DECEMBER 2022

Turkish forces have shelled the village of Bene in the Sherawa district of the Afrin Canton which has been occupied by Turkey and allied mercenaries since 2018.

The village of Til El-Leben in Til Temir was attacked with howitzers at noon. Another bombardment this afternoon targeted the village of Gozeliye.

In the region of Kobane, continued attacks on Sunday were directed at the villages of Zormixar, Çariqli and Ziyarat. The aggression followed last night's bombardments on villages in the west of Kobane, launched from the Mürşitpınar border crossing.



Turkey's pro-government media says Greece in state of panic after Erdoğan's missile strike threat

MEDYANEWS | 12 DECEMBER 2022

Turkey's various pro-government media organs on Monday carried headlines claiming that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's comments about Tayfun (typhoon) missiles that have the capability to reach Athens have created alarm and panic in Greece.

Near-identical headlines and news reports of this nature on Turkey's various pro-government media are usually interpreted as public relations efforts by the Turkish government.

“Our neighbor Greece is almost on red alert after President Erdoğan's statements. The Tayfun has shot to the top of the country's agenda and created panic in Athens, and the Greek media have announced it to their readers in headlines, calling it a scandal,” the Hürriyet said.

Another pro-government daily, the Sabah, also claimed panic in Greece, reprinting most of the Greek headlines.

“We have started to build our missiles now. Naturally this frightens the Greeks,” Erdoğan said during a speech in the northern province of Samsun on Sunday. “When you say ‘Tayfun’, the Greeks are scared. They say it will hit Athens. Of course, it will.”

Turkey will not be a bystander if Greece continues militarizing islands in the Aegean, Erdoğan said.

Relations between the neighbors have been at odds for years over various issues including maritime borders and Cyprus. Tensions between the two countries have ramped up in recent months as Ankara accuses Athens of illegally building up military presence on islands in the Aegean.

Turkey's foreign minister last week also warned Greece that Turkey will take the necessary steps if Athens does not stop militarizing the Greek islands.

Turkey tested its short-range ballistic missile Tayfun for the first time in October over the Black Sea. The test showed that the missile could reach 560 km, a range more than double that of the current missiles in Turkey's arsenal.

Following footage of the test that was leaked to the media, Erdoğan commented on Greece's reaction to Tayfun missiles for the first time on 30 October.

“Tayfun shot onto the agenda of Greece and the Greeks. And where are you still? There's more to come after this,” he said.



Raqqa civil society organizations demand closure of Northern and Eastern Syria airspace

ANF | RAQQA | 12 DECEMBER 2022

Civil society organizations held a press conference in front of its headquarters in the city of Raqqa to call for the closure of the Northern and Eastern Syrian airspace.

Ebdulfetah al-Hamadi, co-chair of the Raqqa Teachers' Union, read the statement.

Al-Hamadi said that Northern and Eastern Syria were the target of the Turkish attacks because the people of the region took care of the democratic nation project, and that this project guarantees the rights of all peoples and can resolve the Syrian crisis with democracy.

Drawing attention to the attacks by the Turkish state against the region, al-Hamadi said that the lives of millions of people were endangered.

On behalf of the civil society organization, Al-Hamadi called on the peoples of the region, the peoples of the world, social, political and legal institutions to support the campaign to close the airspace of Northern and Eastern Syria in order to make the voice of the people of the region heard by the whole world.

Al-Hamadi called on the UN, human rights organizations and lawyers to end the isolation of Leader Öcalan, as he is the founder of the idea of a democratic nation and the brotherhood of peoples, and called for the closure of Northern and Eastern Syrian airspace.

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Health of Rojava people in danger due to heavy embargo

ANF | 12 DECEMBER 2022

The self-administered territories in northern and eastern Syria are home to over one million IDPs. Many of them are internally displaced persons, like the 400,000 people who had to leave the canton of Afrin after the Turkish invasion in 2018.

Embargo from all sides

The region is under a heavy embargo. The autonomous areas in northern and eastern Syria practically no longer receive any aid, as the Sêmalka border crossing near Dêrîk is controlled by the KDP, the ruling party in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq), which collaborates closely with Turkey. The Til Koçer (Al-Yarubiyah) border crossing, which is controlled by the Iraqi army further south, was also closed in 2018 by decision of the UN Security Council after Russia pushed for it. The closure was reconfirmed in 2020. The closure of this border crossing means that UN aid deliveries from Iraq are no longer possible, and the Syrian regime is blocking aid deliveries via Damascus. Russia's aim was that aid deliveries to the region should only come via Damascus and thus provide the Assad regime with a further means of exerting pressure against the autonomous administration. The Assad regime is making good use of this tool and is blocking practically all humanitarian aid to northern and eastern Syria. This puts particular pressure on the Shehba region, which has about 90,000 original inhabitants and an additional 400,000 IDPs.

In order to still be able to care for the people, the Kurdish Red Crescent Heyva Sor a Kurd has reached health tents in the refugee camps, and Heyva Sor a Kurd health centers have also been set up in the villages that are far away from the Avrîn hospital that serves the region.

At the moment there are seven centres, one in Berxwedan camp, one in Serdem camp, in the towns of Ehdas and Tel Rifat, as well as in Ehrez, Birc Qas and Ziyaret.

The embargo hits children and the elderly particularly hard

Due to the embargo by the Assad regime, supplies of certain medicines are running low, and some medicines are already no longer available. In the Heyva Sor a Kurd centers, there is a lack of medicines for inflammation, blood pressure, diabetes and painkillers, which are mainly needed by children and elderly people. The staff of Heyva Sor a Kurd nevertheless care for the people according to their possibilities, control blood pressure and try to compensate for the lack of medication by recommending herbs for the relief of infections.

According to Heyva Sor a Kurd, before the tightening of the embargo, 1,500 people visited the facilities every day. Now the number has even risen to over 2,000.

The people are facing a catastrophe

The ANHA news agency spoke to Heyder Reşîd, the head of the Heyva Sor a Kurd health center in Berxwedan camp. Reşîd warns of massive problems due to the lack of medical equipment and medication. In particular, children and old people with respiratory diseases and colds are threatened. The health centers have run out of medicine for colds, lung diseases and infections. In addition, vehicles are out of order due to lack of fuel and patients have to walk.

Reşîd appealed to the International Red Cross and the World Health Organization to lift the embargo on the region and warned that the residents of the canton and the refugees from Afrin would face a “major catastrophe” if the embargo continued.

Rebîhe Mihemed, who lives in Berxwedan camp and comes to the Heyva Sor a Kurd health centre for treatment, stated that children and elderly people get sick because of the lack of diesel fuel, as heating is no longer possible. Despite everything, Heyva Sor a Kurd takes care of the people as good as possible.

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Mercenaries affiliated to the Turkish state kidnap tribal leader in Girê Spî

ANF | KOBANE | 14 DECEMBER 2022

The army recruited by the Turkish state from ISIS and its mercenaries attacked the town of Elî Baciliyê in the occupied Girê Spî Canton and kidnapped Hayil Casim el Xelef el Hesan, the opinion leader of an Arab tribe named El Bu Esaf.

It is stated that the mercenaries took Hayil Casim el Xelef el Hesan to their headquarters in the center of the canton.



HPG balance sheet: 2,744 soldiers killed, 11 helicopters shot down in 8 months

ANF | BEHDINAN | 15 DECEMBER 2022

Since 14 April, the Turkish army has been carrying out a large-scale invasion in the Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). Since then, war has been waged there at the highest intensity. While the Turkish state systematically tries to hide its losses, the press center of the People's Defense Forces (HPG) publishes daily and monthly accounts of the clashes. The HPG reported 299 actions last month and a total of 2,852 actions against the invading forces, in which at least 2,744 soldiers were killed. In the fight against the Turkish army, 199 guerrilla fighters have fallen in the past eight months.

The HPG's statement on its eight-month balance sheet reads as follows:

“The historic resistance of the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla against the invasion operation launched by the Turkish army on 14 April to occupy Southern Kurdistan has now been going on for eight months. The fascist AKP/MHP regime is trying to complete its genocidal policy by destroying the free Kurdish identity and the reality of a free Kurdistan. The main aim of the Turkish state is to destroy the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, which is considered as the crucial obstacle in the realization of its dirty plans. The colonialist Turkish army expected to achieve its vile goals in the shortest possible time with the unlimited technical support of NATO and the help of collaborators, but it failed because of the Apoist fighters who sacrificially and victoriously turned every inch of Kurdistan into a field of resistance.

3,152 Turkish attacks with prohibited weapons

The Turkish invading army, which is stuck in the Zap, Avaşin and Metîna regions in the face of our guerrilla resistance, resorts again and again to the cruelest illegal methods of war. Thus, the resistance areas are attacked non-stop with banned bombs and chemical weapons. The Turkish army draws courage for its genocidal attacks against the Kurdish people from the deadly international silence. It is permanently committing war crimes before the eyes of the world. The Turkish army committed war crimes of unprecedented cruelty without hesitation by attacking the war tunnels and positions of our forces 3152 times with internationally outlawed bombs (phosphorus bombs, thermobaric bombs, tactical nuclear weapons) and chemical weapons in the past eight months of war. Collaborators, representatives of a traitorous and defeatist line in Kurdistan, openly supported the Turkish invasion by opening routes for the army in Kurdistan and trying to encircle the guerrillas. In this way, the resistance of the guerrillas against the invasion and occupation of Kurdistan was meant to be crushed from behind. Despite all the appeals of our people, these vicious attempts never stopped. The freedom guerrillas of Kurdistan, despite these inhuman attacks, continued their resistance in the war positions uninterruptedly with unwavering Apoist sacrifice and once again impressively demonstrated the invincibility of their will.

The guerrillas did not let the Turkish army rest a moment

The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla have dealt heavy blows to the Turkish army with its revolutionary popular warfare. It combined the new guerrilla tactics and proved that it has the power to thwart all kinds of attacks with its professional tactics of warfare in mobile units, through war tunnels and skillful use of terrain. Within the framework of the Bazên Zagrosê and Şehîd Savaş Maraş Cenga Xabûrê revolutionary offensives, our forces have not given the enemy a moment's rest with ambushes, infiltrations, raids, sabotage operations, assassinations, the use of heavy weapons, skirmishes, coordinated guerrilla actions and revolutionary operations. Last month, 299 guerrilla actions were carried out. Thus, a total of 2,852 guerrilla actions have taken place in the last eight months. In the process, 2,744 members of the invading forces, including 12 contras and 20 senior military officers, were killed and at least 385 injured. The Turkish army suffered a great loss of morale and motivation due to the effective actions of the guerrillas, which took place at all times of the year. In order to get them out of the quagmire and hide the defeat, war Minister Hulusi Akar visited the border several times. However, he did not succeed in motivating the troops and hiding the defeat. The Turkish army not just conceals the number of soldiers killed and does not reveal their names. It even burns their bodies by bombarding them with fighter jets, attack helicopters, howitzers, and mortars. Corpses of soldiers are thrown in bags into ravines and defeats are sought to be covered up with fake reports of victory in the special war media. Although clear information on the identity and pictures of the bodies of soldiers under the control of the guerrillas have been documented and published, the Turkish state turns a deaf and a mute ear. The Turkish state is thus making it clear that it does not even care about the soldiers it itself drove onto the battlefield.

Our guerrilla struggle, which began with our immortal commander Egîd (Mahsum Korkmaz), showed its sacrifice with Zilan and its resistance to betrayal and surrender with Bêrîtan. This struggle became an impenetrable wall against the invading forces through the example of Reşît Serdar. In the face of the invasion, all our fighters in the resistance areas produced new Zîlans and Bêrîtans, Saras and Rûkens. In their frugality, our comrades have not allowed themselves to be defeated even under the most difficult conditions and have fought with the most meager means. They take their place in the history of our people's struggle as outstanding examples of sacrifice.

Hundreds of invasion attacks by the Turkish occupation army, involving tens of thousands of soldiers, contras, and mercenaries and using all technical means, were thwarted by our professional forces. Countless guerrilla actions were carried out in the areas claimed by the invaders. Our forces continue their uninterrupted resistance in every corner of Kurdistan from the north to the south and inflict heavy blows on the fascist Turkish army all the time. The actions carried out by our forces and the reality of the war were made available to the public through Gerîla TV and the facts that the colonialist Turkish army tried to hide with the help of the special war media were clearly revealed.

While the Freedom Guerrilla of Kurdistan fought sacrificially against the genocide and the extermination attacks against our people and waged an unprecedented struggle in these eight months, 199 of our comrades have fallen in the sacrificial struggle. The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla are following the line of the martyrs on the basis of the Apoist ideology and have once again shown that they have the determination and strength to achieve victory.

Eight-months of balance

The balance sheet for the period between April 14 and December 14 is as follows:

Actions by our forces:

— 2,852 actions were carried out based on a variety of tactics such as ambush, infiltration, raid, sabotage, assassination, the use of heavy weapons, skirmishes and attacks, coordinated guerrilla actions, actions of the air defense forces and revolutionary operations.

The results of the actions by our forces:

— 2,744 members of the occupation forces, including 20 senior military officers and twelve contras, were killed

— 385 members of the occupation forces were injured

Registered attacks on Medya Defense Zones:

— 3,897 attacks by combat aircraft

— 5,433 attacks by combat helicopters

— The war tunnels and positions of our forces were attacked 3,152 times with internationally outlawed bombs (phosphorus bombs, thermobaric bombs, tactical nuclear weapons) and chemical weapons.

Military equipment seized by our forces:

14 MPT55 infantry rifles; 4 scopes for MPT55 infantry rifles; 4 AK-47 infantry rifles; 3 G3 infantry rifles; 4 grenade launchers; 2 M16 infantry rifles; 2 HK416 infantry rifles; 1 BKC machine gun; 1 B7 rocket launcher; 1 MPT66 infantry rifle; 4 pistols; 4 grenade launcher grenades; 848 rounds of M16 and BKC ammunition; 18 hand grenades and numerous smoke grenades; 4 assault waistcoats (steel); 4 steel shields; 3 cartridge belts; 12 magazines; 7 day/night binoculars; 4 thermal binoculars; 4 laser sights; 2 infrared scopes; 1 laser scope; 1 thermal imaging camera; 4 surveillance camera systems; 3 helmet cameras; 1 portable radar system; 44 kg of explosives; 4 mines; 1 mine blasting device; 1 mine detector; 8 mobile phones; 3 radios; 1 solar energy panel; 1 compass; 5 knives (bayonet); 6 military rucksacks; 2 berets; 2 helmets; 9 torches; 2 UPS power converters; 4 energy source; 2 explosive charges with cortex, TNT, C3; Parts of a surveillance camera system; 1 sniper rifle

Military equipment destroyed by our forces:

8 Sikorsky transport helicopters; 3 attack helicopters; 2 tanks; 17 armored military vehicles; 4 excavators; 72 surveillance camera systems; 53 drones; 8 radar systems; 5 thermal imaging cameras; 2 Telescopes; 3 Signal Jammer; 5 motion detectors; 2 audio listening devices; 1 photo trap; 1 container; 137 emplacements; 42 military tents; 1 camouflage shelter; 1 Chemical gas transfer system; 1 armory; 7 A4 weapons; 2

BKC machine guns; 300 kg of explosives; 12 demolition devices; 2 A4 emplacements; 2 chemical weapons devices; 2 suction devices; 2 mortars; 1 AT4 rocket launcher; 1 shield; 1 projector; 1 food depot

Military equipment damaged by our forces:

48 Sikorsky transport helicopters; 32 attack helicopters; 19 emplacements; 12 drones; 9 excavators; 6 armored military vehicles; 3 military tents; 1 container.

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Syrian embargo deprives 15,000 students of education in Afrin and Shehba

ANF | SHEHBA | 15 DECEMBER 2022

On December 4, The Afrin Region Education and Training Board announced the suspension of education for a week, after which it was extended for another week. As a result, 15 thousand students at 72 schools and faculties have been deprived of education.

Currently, the Afrin Region Education and Training Board has no alternative so as to continue educational activities. Fadil Çawîş, Co-Chair of the Afrin Region Education and Training Board, told ANHA that they could not continue education online due to the power and internet cuts in the region.

Çawîş said that the discussions on new methods of educational activities continued, but did not share the details.

Çawîş warned that if the embargo continued, a generation of students would get no education. He called on the organizations promoting children's rights to put pressure on the Syrian regime to lift the embargo on Shehba Canton.

The 4th Brigade of the Syrian army has intensified the embargo since the beginning of August. The 4th Brigade does not allow the supply of fuel, food, and medicine to the region. As a result of the embargo, municipal services were stopped, and schools suspended education. Also, the Afrin Hospital continues to offer service under very limited conditions. In the meantime, bread shortages may also arise due to the lack of flour, yeast, and diesel to run the bakeries.

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19 schools in Kobanê destroyed by Turkish bombs

ANF | KOBANE | 15 DECEMBER 2022

Hundreds of Kurdish pupils in the canton of Kobanê can no longer study as they did a few weeks ago. They have to flee from the new war front opened by the Turkish state in the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria, or their school is in ruins. According to the education committee of the self-governing Euphrates region, a total of 16 educational institutions in Kobanê have been razed to the ground or severely damaged as a result of Turkish bombing since the new wave of attacks began more than three weeks ago. Three more schools have been closed as a precautionary measure, as shelling has already caused serious damage to the facilities.

“Due to this targeted destruction, countless children and youth in Kobanê are denied the right to education,” emphasizes Bekir Cerade, co-chair of the Education Committee in the Euphrates region. The committee is currently unable to create alternative learning spaces in place of the destroyed schools. Due to the continued bombardment of the civilian infrastructure in Kobanê, which according to Cerade, is “relentless and cynical”, it is not possible to foresee when reconstruction will begin.

Students in the villages of Koran, Bexdik, Xan, Qeremox, Cîşan, Werbîsan, Elişar, Zormixar, Çarqlî, Zorava, Sivtik, Korelî, Ziyaretê, Boban, Beyade and Çilxilo are affected by the cancellation of classes. “We cannot say when the children from the affected localities will be able to go back to school and classes will start again,” Cerade said. It has also become apparent, he said, that the possibilities of distributing them to other schools very quickly reach their limits due to the lack of accommodation options for families. “So it is written in the stars when classes will resume for children in villages close to the border.”

A total of 22,000 children affected

Turkey has been attacking the population and civilian infrastructure in north-eastern Syria since 19 November. It was not only in Kobanê that classes were canceled as a result. As of 30 November, around 22,000 pupils, including in Cizîrê, Minbic and in the not fully occupied areas of Efrîn, have been deprived of their schooling. In addition, more than 240 schools had to be closed.

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Life in Shehba under threat due to Turkish attacks and Syrian embargo

NUJIYAN ADAR | QAMISHLO | 16 DECEMBER 2022

Violent conflicts, occupation, and plunder have hit the Shehba Region, which has 75 affiliated villages, since the beginning of the Syrian civil war. The region is constantly under artillery fire and threatened with invasion.

The Shehba Region, where the Afrin people migrated after the Turkish occupation of their land in 2018, is under an embargo by the Syrian government and attacks by the Turkish army and its mercenaries. As the winter began, the embargo was further aggravated and the supply of convenience goods is not allowed now. Public services and health care have stopped due to the lack of fuel, mainly affecting small children, the ill, and the elderly.

Fuel trucks not allowed for two months

According to the annual plan of the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES), 200 fuel trucks were supposed to reach the Shehba Region. Under normal circumstances, 15 trucks were allowed into the region, which needed 60 trucks every two weeks, but the 4th Armored Division, an elite formation of the Syrian Army, has completely blocked the passage of fuel trucks for the last two months.

15 thousand students deprived of education

The Shehba Region has 200,000 residents, including those who migrated from the occupied Afrin. The region is currently facing a heating problem due to winter, electricity cuts and fuel shortages. Education in schools has been suspended. 15,000 students cannot receive education because 27 schools have suspended education.

No cylinder

The number of cylinders supposed to be supplied to the region has been reduced from 28 thousand to 10 thousand. The price of a cylinder is 120 thousand Syrian liras.

Health conditions worsen

After the checkpoints of the Syrian government imposed heavy taxes on vehicles carrying medicine to the region, the transfer of milk supply for children has been halted, and the medicines provided by health centers and pharmacies has fallen short. Previously, 5 ambulances served citizens at Avrin Hospital, where approximately 600 citizens were treated per day. Hospital services have also come to a standstill today.

Life in camps even more severe

The districts of Til Rifet, Ehres, Ehdas and Fafin in the region, which remains under an embargo, as well as the Afrin, Shehba, Veger, Serdem and Berxwedan camps are also facing major difficulties.

Speaking to ANF, Afrin Canton Council Co-Chair Zelux Bekir said that there have been daily attacks by heavy weapons and drones against the forcibly displaced people in Shehba for the past four years. "Civilian people are being targeted, massacres are being committed. Attacks hit children, women, and the elderly without distinction. The resistance is still continuing here," she said.

Turkish state on one hand and Syrian government on the other

Bekir pointed out that Turkish attacks have escalated simultaneously with the embargo imposed by the Syrian government: "Winter has come, living conditions have worsened, and the embargo has gradually

intensified. On the one hand, the Turkish state and its mercenaries are continuing to attack. On the other hand, the Syrian government is aggravating the embargo. They want to break the will of the people through hunger, forced displacement and disease. In the meantime, Russia is a guarantor state in the region, but it approves these practices so that the region should remain under the control of the Syrian government. As a result, they cooperate to break the will of the Kurdish people.”

Embargo affects every aspect of life

Bekir revealed that numerous elderly and sick people lost their lives as a result of the embargo last year: “The situation of our people living in tents in the camps is obvious to see. On the other hand, those living in districts are mostly staying in semi-demolished houses.

An embargo against a people resisting in a region under difficult conditions is a disaster. Although there is a very short distance between Aleppo and Shehba, the Syrian government has 7 checkpoints. The transfer of fuel, cylinder flour and medicine into the region through these 7 checkpoints is denied. We are facing a serious humanitarian crisis. If the embargo continues like this, the lives of children, the elderly, and patients will remain under threat.”

Checkpoints must be removed

Bekir insisted that pressure should be put on the Syrian government to lift the embargo and remove the 7 checkpoints between Aleppo and Shehba. “These 7 checkpoints overtax even basic supplies. The people of the region are fighting a struggle against the Turkish attacks and the Syrian embargo. Our people are aware of the hostile policies against the Kurdish people and the Autonomous Administration project. Our goal is to return to Afrin, and we will fight no matter the cost.”



More details on the Sweden-Turkey deal emerge

ANF | 17 DECEMBER 2022

The foreign policy of the AKP/MHP regime is simple. Neo-Ottoman imperialism and pan-Turkish aspirations are intended to pacify the regime internally and make Turkey a great power. As a foreign policy tool, the regime uses aggressive war policies, accompanied by attempts to blackmail the international community. Whether it is the water issue, refugees, grain from Ukraine, everything is used to push through its own interests and to dress up the domestic political and economic crisis with national elation.

With the Ukraine war, Turkey gained new options. Finland’s and Sweden’s application to join NATO became a means of extorting further concessions from the countries concerned through Turkey’s veto. Most recently, Mahmut Tat, an asylum-seeking political activist, was extradited from Sweden at Turkey’s request and immediately imprisoned in Istanbul. A document published by the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter on Wednesday, dated 25 November, shows once again how far the collaboration goes.

Dozens of people already forced to leave the country

In the document entitled “Implementation of the Trilateral Agreement between Turkey, Sweden and Finland”, Sweden emphasizes how committed it is to the “fight against terrorism”, meaning the Kurdish struggle for freedom. In particular, the right of residence is apparently used as a weapon. It says that Swedish authorities are now paying more attention to “PKK-related security problems” in the procedure for issuing residence and work permits. A dozen people have already been prevented from entering the country or “forced to leave”.

Restrictions on Erdoğan’s fundamental rights

Furthermore, the Swedish government is pandering with its new anti-terror law, for which the constitution was unanimously amended by right-wing conservatives and social democrats. These laws are seen as a “genuflection to Erdoğan”. In the future, the Swedish government will be able to introduce new laws restricting freedom of assembly when it comes to associations involved in or supporting terrorism.

In addition, under the heading of foreign espionage, the disclosure of secret information will be criminalized and included in the Penal Code. The amendments also mean restrictions on the right to provide information that could harm Swedish relations with other states or organizations such as the UN or NATO. This is a particular attack on the freedom of the press, as it makes investigative research virtually impossible.

Intensive cooperation with MIT

According to the document, the Swedish intelligence service Säpo has “intensified” its cooperation with the Turkish intelligence service MIT. The document mentions a meeting between Säpo and MIT in September. There, they discussed “long-term” cooperation.

Turkey wants more

For the AKP/MHP regime, Sweden’s measures are apparently still not enough. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, for example, stated at the end of November, following the EU foreign ministers’ meeting at which the document was apparently presented, that Turkey continues to attach great importance to meeting its demands. In concrete terms, this means that Turkey wants to push through far more of its interests in order to abandon its blockade stance.

Turkish drone attack in Gire Spi kills three civilians, including a child

ANF | 17 DECEMBER 2022

An unmanned aerial combat vehicle (UCAV) of the Turkish state struck the village of Raqas in the Turkish-occupied Gire Spi (ar: Tal Abyad) city on Saturday. The attack killed three civilians, including a child, and injured another resident, who was hospitalized in Reqa Hospital.

“The Turkish occupation army continues committing humanitarian crimes against the people of north and eastern Syria, attempting to break our people’s determination and preparing for implementing its occupation projects by directly targeting civilians and the infrastructure in the region,” said the Press Center of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in a statement on Saturday.

According to the SDF statement, “Today, at 1:30 P.M., the occupying army committed another crime in the village of al-Raqas in the Chalabiya district, targeting a group of civilians using a UAV, resulting in three civilians being martyred, including a 12-year-old child named Weisi Muhammad Weissi, and one other civilian injured.”

This crime added to the Turkish occupation’s crimes, which killed 16 civilians this month, SDF added.

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Chemical weapons

HPG reports 150 chemical weapons attacks against guerrilla positions in Zap

ANF | BEHDINAN | 10 DECEMBER 2022

In its current statement about the ongoing war in Kurdistan, the Press Office of the People's Defense Forces (HPG) reported that the Turkish army has carried out 150 chemical weapons attacks against a single area in the Zap region of the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) within three days.

“The occupation operation launched by the Turkish army on 15 April has crashed against the wall of legendary resistance and sacrificial will of the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla and has not achieved its goal. The occupation forces cannot protect themselves against the effective actions of the guerrillas and suffer heavy losses. The Turkish army continues its war crimes and uses chemical weapons. Although the use of banned

bombs and chemical weapons has been documented and proved, these crimes are denied by Special War Minister Hulusi Akar. However, the fascist army continues to use chemical weapons in the Medya Defense Zones. On 7, 8 and 9 December, the Şehîd Botan fighting positions in the Çemço resistance area were bombed with chemical weapons at least 150 times.”

On Friday, the guerrilla areas in Southern Kurdistan were additionally bombed five times by fighter jets and ten times by attack helicopters and attacked dozens of times with howitzers, mortars, tanks and heavy weapons, the HPG said.

The guerrillas, on the other hand, continued to carry out resistance actions and two soldiers were killed. Regarding the details of the guerrilla actions on 9 November, the HPG said that the Turkish occupation forces in Çemço were struck twice by mobile guerrilla teams with heavy weapons, killing two soldiers. In the Girê Cûdî resistance area, guerrillas carried out seven actions with heavy weapons, three of them by mobile fighters of YJA Star (Free Women's Troops). On Friday evening, the guerrillas intervened against an airborne operation at Girê Cûdî and forced Turkish transport helicopters to withdraw.

According to the HPG, the Turkish army's chemical weapons operations against the Şehîd Botan position continue. Strikes by fighter jets were directed against Girê Cûdî and the Rostê area in Xakurke. Helicopter attacks, on the other hand, targeted the areas of Girê Amêdî and Girê Cûdî.

On the other hand, HPG also pointed out that suspicious leaflets in the name of HPG are being distributed in Yüksekova in the northern Kurdish province of Hakkari. On these leaflets the names of people from the region are mentioned and threats are made. “We inform these leaflets that they do not come from our forces and are written in the style of special war personnel”, said the HPG, calling upon the people to disregard the leaflets.

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Defence Minister says Turkey will not allow international investigation into chemical weapon use allegations

MEDYANEWS – 10 DECEMBER 2022

Turkey has the capacity to conduct its own inquiries and will not allow any outside body to carry out investigations into the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Turkish Armed Forces in military operations in northern Iraq, the Turkish Minister of Defense said on Saturday.

Minister Hulusi Akar responded to questions over allegations on chemical weapons use asked in parliament by a deputy of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). The allegations have been on the international agenda since mid-October, following the release of a video by the military wing of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

“Chemical weapons and ammunition are not developed, produced, stocked, or used in the Turkish Armed Forces,” Akar said during debates in parliament on the 2023 budget.

Akar called the allegations ungrounded and ruled out the possibility of an investigation that could be carried out by a respected international institution, such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

“We, as the Turkish Armed Forces, as the state of the Republic of Turkey, are a sovereign independent state, we have the capacity to control ourselves, to evaluate ourselves, and we do not accept anyone from outside,” he said.

Akar also told the parliament that Ankara sent a delegation to northern Iraq on 24 November to investigate the allegations.

“We are announcing it for the first time in here, on November 24 we established a delegation, the delegation went there, conducted analysis and measurements, they gathered and collected all of them, submitted them here to the laboratories of the Ministry of Health, we now have in our hands the reports that says none of those are chemicals,” Akar said.

As he did in the past, Akar admitted that the military used tear gas during a hostage saving operation last year. Though some experts see the use of tear gas as a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Akar claimed that it could be used in law enforcement or special operations to protect human life.

According to an expert doctor, Abbas Mansouran, although Akar’s words on tear gas usage are sufficient to initiate an international investigation according to international law, all the evidence indicates that Turkey used toxic gas, which is much more powerful and deadly than tear gas.

Human rights advocates worldwide have for weeks urged international organizations to take action over the allegations regarding Turkey’s use of chemical weapons in operations against Kurdish armed groups in neighboring countries, however, only a member state can initiate an inquiry under the authority of the OPCW.



HSM calls for an independent investigation into Turkish use of chemical weapons

ANF | BEHDINAN | 11 DECEMBER 2022

The People’s Defense Center (HSM) Headquarters Command released a statement on Turkey’s continued use of chemical weapons in Southern Kurdistan (Northern Iraq) and the latest remarks by Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar.

Akar told parliament in Ankara on Friday that Turkey is capable of conducting its own investigation and will not allow any outside body to investigate allegations of chemical weapons use by the Turkish army in military operations in northern Iraq. “Chemical weapons and ammunition are not developed, manufactured, stored or used by the Turkish Armed Forces,” Akar said during the budget debate in parliament.

The allegations are unfounded and an investigation by a respected international institution such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is therefore out of the question, he said, arguing that the Republic of Turkey is a sovereign, independent state and has the ability to “control and evaluate itself.”

Akar went on to say that Ankara had already conducted its own investigations: “On 24 November, we sent a delegation to northern Iraq to conduct analyses and measurements there, collect the results and present them here in the laboratories of the Ministry of Health.” As in the past, Akar admitted that the military used tear gas during last year's military operation in Gare. He said this was allowed during law enforcement or special operations to protect lives.

During the operation in Gare in February 2021, the Turkish army bombarded a PKK prison camp for days. The camp contained soldiers, policemen and MIT agents captured by the guerrillas, and thirteen prisoners of war were killed. According to HSM sources, the form of the attack clearly indicated that no one was meant to survive. Fifteen guerrilla fighters were killed in the four-day operation.

In its statement on Sunday, the People's Defense Center (HSM) said: “The Turkish Minister of War, Hulusi Akar, has presented the public with a model example of hypocrisy. He himself gave the operational order for the 150 chemical weapons attacks on 7, 8 and 9 December on guerrilla resistance positions near the village of Sîda in the Sheladize town in the Amadiya district. Without blushing or feeling ashamed, he stated the exact opposite during the budget debate in the Turkish National Assembly (TBMM) in front of the parliament and thus in front of the whole society on 9 December. He repeated his earlier statements and said that they do not have chemical weapons in their inventory and would never use them. In addition, he accused and threatened those who bring up the use of chemical weapons.”

Akar's claim that Turkey investigated and refuted the allegations itself is simply ridiculous, the HSM said. “Investigating war crimes by the perpetrator cannot be objective and lacks any credibility. No power that uses chemical weapons has ever admitted to its own war crimes,” the HSM stated, pointing to the example of Halabja. “While the whole world saw the thousands of dead bodies on the streets, Saddam Hussein still denied the use of poison gas.”

“Therefore, no value can be attached to the lies of the war criminal Hulusi Akar. An asphalted road leads to our resistance position, against which chemical weapons were used 150 times within three days. The area can be reached by vehicle and investigations can be carried out there. We call on independent delegations to conduct investigations on the spot and see the truth for themselves,” the People's Defense Headquarters concluded.

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‘Kurdish people's future is being stolen with chemical weapons’

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 13 DECEMBER 2022

The Turkish state, which has been continuing its invasion campaign in the territories of South Kurdistan (North Iraq) since April 14, is resorting to banned chemical weapons. Most recently, the HPG reported

that the invading Turkish army bombed the positions of the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla forces 150 times between 7-9 December with chemical weapons.

Nature of Kurdistan is also destroyed

Physiologist Dr. Sadat Abdullah Eziz spoke to ANF about the effects of chemical weapons on the nature of Kurdistan. Eziz pointed out that chemical weapons and toxic gases lead to humanitarian disasters, adding, “These weapons undoubtedly have a terrible effect not only on people but also on nature.”

The physiologist emphasized that the effects of chemical weapons last for decades: “With such weapons, our future is being stolen. Nature does not renew itself because of chemical weapons. The international organizations that deal with this issue, especially scientific organizations, should urgently come to the region and conduct detailed examinations.”

A research center should be established

Dr. Eziz stated that a research center should be established to investigate the chemical weapons used by the Turkish state. Members of non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders and experts can take part in such a center, he noted, adding, “Since a nation is facing a genocide, the use of chemical weapons should come to the fore globally.”

Dr. Eziz noted that enemies of the Kurdish people are making efforts to treat the matter as a political issue: “The mass slaughter and genocide attempts against the Kurds should not be considered a political issue because it is not just about eradicating a movement or organization, but rather the entire Kurdish people. The people of the region should be protected against this genocide attempt. The Kurdish question cannot be resolved through chemical weapons. The Turkish state must understand very well that this issue can only be resolved through dialogue and negotiation.”

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Iran

Kurdish language activist jailed in Iran goes on a hunger strike

ANF | 10 DECEMBER 2022

Mozhgan Kavosi, a Kurdish language activist, right-to-mother tongue advocate, human rights activist, and former political prisoner, has gone on strike to protest the conditions of her detention in Tonekabon Central Prison.

According to the report received by the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, during the past few days, Mozhgan Kavosi went on strike due to the lack of access to her basic rights in prison, and conditions

are reported to be harsh. According to informed sources, the place where the Kurdish activist is kept lacks heating devices and other necessary facilities.

According to Hengaw, Mozhgan Kavosi has been accused of “promoting separatist ideas” for teaching the Kurdish language.

Hengaw has been informed that she has only had one contact with someone outside the prison, a brief phone call, in which she informed about her unfavorable condition.

Mozhgan Kavosi was transferred to Tonekabon Central Prison on Sunday, October 30, 2022, after 35 days of being in a solitary cell in the Nowshahr Intelligence Detention Center in Mazandaran Province.

This Kurdish activist was kidnapped by IRGC intelligence forces in her home located in Nowshahr during the recent protests on Thursday, September 22, 2022.



Second execution in connection with uprising in Iran

ANF | 12 DECEMBER 2022

After the first activist was executed on Thursday against the backdrop of the uprising in Iran and Rojhilat, Majidreza Rahnavard was now executed by the regime in Mashhad on Monday morning. Rahnavard was sentenced to death and executed in a fast-track trial within three and a half weeks. The regime’s claim that he stabbed two members of the notorious Basij militia on 17 November serves as a pretext.

More executions are imminent. About twelve activists have been sentenced to death and are awaiting execution. The regime is trying to quell the ongoing protests through the extreme brutality of its militias and troops, but also through public examples such as executions.

Last week, Mohsen Shekari was hanged after being convicted of “waging war against God”. He had been accused of blocking a road and injuring a Basij militia member on 25 September during the initial phase of the protests. During his trial, Shekari was not given a lawyer of his choice and there were marks of torture on his face.



Kurdish young man dies due to intelligence ministry's torture in Iran

ANF | 13 DECEMBER 2022

A Kurdish civilian named Shahriar Adeli died in the hospital on 8 December due to torture in the detention centre of the Ministry of Intelligence in Sardasht, West Azarbaijan province, after being temporarily released on bail, reported the Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN).

The 27-year-old civilian was arrested on 22 November for participating in the public protests in Sardasht.

According to KHRN, the interrogators of the intelligence ministry severely tortured the young man under detention.

He was released on bail on 3 December, while in a critical condition due to torture.

Adeli, who was taken to Sardasht Hospital due to internal bleeding after he was released, died on 8 December due to the severity of his injuries.

Reportedly, after the ministry was informed about the civilian's death, they threatened his family to announce the cause of his death as a heart attack.

The effects of severe torture are evident on Adeli's body in the images received by the Kurdistan Human Rights Network.

According to KHRN, since the beginning of the nationwide uprising of the people of Iran after the government murder of Zhina Mahsa Amini, forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran killed at least 116 Kurdish civilians, including 12 children, in public protests in the cities and villages of Kurdistan and other regions of the country.

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Uprising in East Kurdistan and Iran leaves three months behind

ANF | 16 DECEMBER 2022

Sparked by the death of 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in the custody of morality police in September, the nationwide protests in Iran have left 90 days behind.

Sonya Sharif, who was released after two months of detention, was welcomed on Thursday by a massive crowd in the city of Abadan in the Ilam province. The event turned into a demonstration.

A citizen named Elireza Kerim was commemorated in the Shabadi city of Kermanshah province 40 days after she was killed by the regime forces.

Families of six citizens who were sentenced to death in the city of Urmia have been prevented from visiting prisons.

In spite of arrests and killings, anti-government protests continue in many cities of Iran and East Kurdistan.

According to a statement by the Iranian Human Rights Organization on December 14, 493 citizens have been killed by the regime forces from the day protests started to December 13. The statement revealed that 68 of those killed were under the age of 18.

It is reported that at least 18,424 people have been detained during demonstrations so far.

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Feminicide

Turkey's interior minister verbally attacks female Kurdish deputies

MEDYANEWS | 10 DECEMBER 2022

Turkey's Interior Minister verbally attacked two female MPs of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on Saturday, accusing one of them of being a tenured member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The most recent war of words between the minister and the Kurdish politicians started after Remziye Tosun, a deputy of the HDP, took off her white cotton traditional headscarf (tülbent) in the parliament two days ago.

Tosun recalled Kurdish women who traditionally throw their white headscarves on the ground to stop violent fights among men.

"I am throwing my tülbent here, to this place where the decisions of war are made, hoping an end to the conflicts, an end the isolation system in prisons, and for an honourable peace coming to this geography," she said, calling for the government to end operations against Kurdish groups in northern Iraq and north-east Syria.

Arzu Erdem, a deputy of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), called Tosun's act a "vulgar show of provocation". Meral Daniş Beştaş, HDP's parliamentary group deputy, responded to Erdem, explaining the traditional roots of Tosun's act once more.

"We are facing a mentality that sanctifies war to such an extent that it calls this act vulgar. We have our tülbent to throw on the ground and the will to establish peace," Daniş Beştaş said.

The Kurdish politician said that the HDP had nothing to fear. "On that issue, you have turned into a war machine with legs," she told the members of the parliament. "We are coming across a new Süleyman Soylu everyday," she added, referring to the minister.

"Do you know who is the enemy of the Kurds," Soylu said in the parliament, in response to Tosun and Daniş Beştaş. "They are the PKK and the HDP who hand over a Kalashnikov to a 10-year-old child," he added, referring to the automatic rifle named after its original Russian designer.

"Do not look innocent. Everybody knows whom you have abducted, whom you have sent to the mountains, how mothers curse after you and hate you," Soylu continued, without explicitly saying which Kurdish politician he was referring to.

The minister then directly attacked Tosun: "This is what I want to say, Remziye Tosun is only and only a tenured staff of the PKK. This is the case according to all the records of the state," he said.

Following Soylu, Daniş Beştaş once again spoke in the parliament, claiming that the minister referred to her when he said "do not look innocent".

"My glance is innocent, or, in other words, I am not guilty, why should I look guilty," Daniş Beştaş said. "I do not have many faces like you. I have only one face," she added.

"We expect you to act like a minister. You instead are vomiting here over us. You in haste declared me and Remziye Tosun criminals," the Kurdish politician said, adding that mothers in Turkey's southeast called the minister the biggest enemy of the Kurds.

The tensions between the deputies of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the HDP escalated in recent weeks, as Ankara started airstrikes against Kurdish groups in northeast Syria, accusing them of orchestrating a deadly bomb attack in Istanbul last month.

Those tensions have turned into verbal arguments during ongoing 2023 budget debates in the parliament, as the government repeatedly announces plans to initiate a ground invasion into mainly-Kurdish controlled territories in northeast Syria, while the PKK accuses the Turkish military of using chemical weapons in northern Iraq.

Why women are burning themselves in Iraqi Kurdistan

ANF | 16 DECEMBER 2022

In the Kurdistan region, women who feel trapped in abusive households often see suicide by self-immolation as their only way out.

The Kurdistan Regional Government has tried to combat violence against women, but many remain at risk.

The BBC has been granted rare access to one of the main hospitals for burns in Iraqi Kurdistan, where many women die of self-inflicted burns.

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Ecocide

Turkish-backed factions continue logging olive trees in Afrin

ANF | 17 DECEMBER 2022

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that Turkish-backed factions in Afrin continue to cut down olive trees extensively this December, in order to sell them as fire logs for heating.

Accordingly, members of Rejal Al-Harb faction cut down nearly 20 olive trees in Khalilaka village in Rajo district.

Moreover, members of “Al-Sham Corps” faction cut down nearly 200 olive trees in Kabashin village in Sherawa district of Afrin, and 25 almond trees in Jaqmaq Kabir village in Rajo district, where stolen logs were transported to Idlib markets for sale as fire logs for heating, according to SOHR.

Furthermore, the observatory reported that Al-Hamza Division and members of the National Army cut down nearly 250 olive trees in Kafr Jarjah village in Shera district and Miskah Fawqani in Jindirec district of Afrin. The stolen logs were transported to Afrin markets for sale as fire logs for heating. The fire log prices ranged from 100 USD to 125 USD per ton.

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Human Rights Violations

Three reports demanding the lifting of immunity of HDP MP Uca sent to parliament

ANF | ANKARA | 10 DECEMBER 2022

Three reports were prepared by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office about the lifting of the immunity of HDP Êlih MP Feleknas Uca and sent to the Parliament.

One of the reports was prepared on 4 February with the allegation of "inciting the people to hatred and enmity". The statements given by the Turkish state to news agencies regarding the attacks on Northern and Eastern Syria and Shengal were cited as the reason.

In the second filing, Uca was accused of "propaganda for a terrorist organization". Uca's speech in Êlih on 8 March 2021 was the reason for the second report.

In the third report, the accusation of "making illegal meetings and demonstrations" was brought. The march, which was held in solidarity with the hunger strike actions launched against the İmralı isolation on 8 November 2018, was cited as the reason for this report. All three reports were sent to Parliament.

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IHD says violations of rights in Hakkari increasing

ANF | HAKKARI | 10 DECEMBER 2022

Violations of freedom of expression and right to life in Kurdistan continue to increase. Hakkari is one of the cities where human rights violations are never lacking and are increasing. Hakkari has been living under emergency law for 6 years. All kinds of democratic actions and activities have been prohibited in Hakkari for 2,400 days. With these bans, freedom of expression, assemblies, demonstrations, and marches were suspended, and even kite flying, saying Jin Jiyan Azadi and saying not to war were considered crimes.

Human Rights Association Hakkari (İHD) Hakkari Branch President, lawyer Yusuf Çobanoğlu, spoke to ANF about the violations of rights in Hakkari on the occasion of 10 December, Human Rights Day.

Çobanoğlu said: "First of all, human beings are human with their rights, and this struggle will continue as long as there are rights defenders."

Stating that countless citizens have been subjected to torture in the last year and that the state forces have made great efforts to prevent these tortures from being proven, Çobanoğlu said: “As rights defenders, we tried to do our best to stand by the victims and defend their rights despite these obstacles. In the last 10 years, dozens of our people have been affected and killed. Impunity policies for the perpetrators of these murders have been carefully put into effect by the prosecutor's office and the courts. In addition to these rights violations, the freedom of expression of almost the entire society has been violated by countless investigations, and people have tried to be silenced with the judicial stick. The persistence of bans on protests and events for more than 2,400 days clearly shows that the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and demonstration has been suspended.”

It is a crime to say Jin, Jiyan, Azadi

Stating that the people were most exposed to torture and ill-treatment in 2022, Çobanoğlu said that even “flying kites in Hakkari, saying Jin Jiyan Azadi, or no to war were considered crimes.”

Prohibitions in Van and Batman provinces were brought to the Constitutional Court, and the Constitutional Court made it clear that the decision to ban actions and activities with governor's circulars was a violation of rights. The article ‘Fundamental rights and freedoms can only be limited by law’ is the basis of these violations. In 2022, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment has been violated the most in our region.



Report reveals that academic freedom is diminishing in Turkey

ANF | 10 DECEMBER 2022

Thirty-nine academics from 13 universities, including Boğaziçi University, the Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ/METU), Ankara University and Ege University, have released a report about “Restructuring Higher Education in Türkiye”, reported Bianet.

Speaking at a press conference in Ortaköy, İstanbul, Prof. Üstün Ergüder, the former rector of Boğaziçi University, said the situation of the universities was much better in the 1990s than today.

“There was a revolt in 1992 and the universities began electing their own rectors. Thus, academic performance and autonomy in universities have increased, but in recent years, YÖK [Council of Higher Education] has become much more dominant in universities and academic autonomy has gradually decreased,” he said.

The YÖK was founded in 1981 by the military government that took over after the 1980 coup d'état.

“The report aims to prevent the diminishing of academic autonomy and the decreased quality of the universities,” he said. “We hope that it will contribute to a change.”

“YÖK should be abolished”

Prof. Taner Bilgiç talked about a July workshop on which the report was based, saying, “The YÖK should be abolished, and a new framework law should be made for the restructuring of universities.”

“The total number of university students in Türkiye exceeds 8 million. However, only 2 million of them are in formal education at the undergraduate level. In other words, the number of undergraduate students required to be in school is 2 million. The majority of the students are enrolled in distance education or associate degree. The total number of universities in Turkey is 208; 75 of them are foundation universities and 129 are state universities.”

“When we divide 2 million students into [the number of] universities, there are 2 thousand students per school. Taking into account that there are 182,000 academics, we see that the number of academic staff is not enough.”

“It is proudly mentioned that there is a university in every province, but Türkiye is the country with the highest number of unemployed universities among OECD countries.”

Academic autonomy

“The university should be able to make effective and independent decisions regarding its own academic structuring, study, standard setting, employment, management and all academic activities.”

“In other words, if a university is going to establish a faculty, it must decide on its own. The basis of this is merit. You cannot manage a university with top-down appointments. No rector is sent to any university in the world, saying, ‘We found a great person for you.’”

“A university also determines its own research areas. In addition, the rectors should not be overly centralized and should share their powers. The powers should be shared with various boards and commissions, and bottom-up and horizontal decision-making mechanisms should be established in a way that limits the excessively centralized powers of the rector and other top executives.”

“If the rector does not share his powers and there is no supervision, we come across a dictator in the current situation, and this has been the case for 40 years. Mechanisms should be established so that the boards and commissions can audit the decisions and functioning of the administration and hold them accountable.”

The report was also submitted to the opposition parties on December 5, he added.

Turkey sees alarming rise in rights violations in 2022 – human rights report

MEDYANEWS – 11 DECEMBER 2022

A human rights report on Turkey, published on International Human Rights Day 10 December, shows that the rising trend in human rights violations in the country continued during 2022.

“As human rights defenders, we are locked into making unchanging analyses’ year-on-year about rights violations,” said the report prepared by the Human Rights Association (İHD) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV).

The report said that rights violations in Turkey had reached alarming dimensions in 2022, as a result of government policies that turn every issue into a security issue, polarize society even further, and see violence as the answer to everything.

The report provides a detailed list of rights violations based on data gathered by the two organizations during the first 11 months of 2022. The results show that:

- At least 96 people died and 55 were injured due to armed clashes in the country.
- At least 274 people were killed in Turkey’s cross-border military operations in North and East Syria and northern Iraq.
- Nationalist attacks and hate crimes killed 15 people and injured 41.
- At least 1521 workers lost their lives in the first 10 months of 2022 in Turkey as a result of work accidents/murders.
- Men killed at least 308 women and 36 children.

The İHD and TİHV also stated that there were serious complaints about the violations of the right to life of civilians, especially in airstrikes and drone attacks conducted by the Turkish Armed Forces in their cross-border operations.

“There are also some complaints and allegations of violations regarding the use of chemical weapons during cross-border operations. All these complaints and allegations of violations need to be investigated independently and effectively in accordance with the principles of international law,” the report adds.

In addition, the report argues that torture has become the most dominant human rights problem in Turkey, due to the government’s mentality that prioritizes the oppression and control of its citizens. According to the report, 1,130 people have applied to TİHV reporting having been subject to torture and other forms of ill-treatment since the beginning of 2022. Meanwhile, the İHD has documented 980 people who have been subject to torture and maltreatment while in the custody of security forces in the same period.

The data of both institutions indicate that more than 5,000 people have been subject to torture and maltreatment by the police in the same period while they were trying to enjoy their right to protest. Meanwhile, 310 prison inmates also submitted complaints of torture and maltreatment to the TİHV.

As of December 2022, there are 336,315 people in prisons in Turkey, while according to the data published by the Ministry of Justice, the total capacity of prisons is 286,797. The total number of people stripped of their freedom reaches 773,951, including 437,636 people on probation, meaning one in every hundred citizens is under direct surveillance by the state.

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127 workplace deaths recorded in Turkey in November

ANF | 12 DECEMBER 2022

The Occupational Health and Safety Council (ISIG) has announced its November report on occupational homicides. The report revealed that 127 workers lost their lives in the workplace in November.

According to the report, 1658 workers died in the first 11 months of 2022 due to crushing, explosion, falling from height, poisoning, and asbestos. According to the report, 338 workers died in the construction/road branch of activity and 327 in agriculture/forestry. Communication remained as the least deadly branch of activity, with only 2 workers being killed. Istanbul saw the highest number of workplace homicides with 229, while the city of Aydın saw the minimum deadly cases with 33.

The report classified occupational homicides according to age groups. 26 children aged 14 or below lost their lives in the workplace, while 35 children aged between 15-17 lost their lives in the last 11 months.

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Police deny religious burial for guerrilla fighter

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 13 DECEMBER 2022

The Turkish state does not even let the fallen guerrilla fighters rest in peace. The relatives of the fallen are systematically humiliated and harassed by the Turkish state.

The guerrilla fighter Bahoz Mijîni, whose real name is Mücahit Tok, was martyred on 4 July 2022 in the Kato Jırka area in the northern Kurdish province of Şırnak. He was subsequently buried by the authorities in a cemetery for the “nameless”. Only when, after a long procedure, a matching DNA result was found, was the body of the fighter allowed to be exhumed again and handed over to the family. That was not all. After Mijîni’s family received the body, the humiliations continued. The cemetery in Silopi, where Mijîni was to be buried, was surrounded by police and only the closest relatives were allowed in. Any religious burial ceremony was denied. The imam was prevented from saying the prayer for the fallen fighter. After the silent burial, the only thing left for the family to do was to leave the cemetery again.



Students in Dersim denounce recruitment attempts and threats

ANF | DERSİM | 13 DECEMBER 2022

Students of Munzur University in Dersim denounced blackmail, threats, and recruitment attempts by the Turkish Secret Service and police authorities. On Monday, a joint press conference was held by students and the office of the Human Rights Association (IHD) in Dersim.

Gürbüz Solmaz, co-chair of the IHD Dersim office, spoke of how the state has increased the pressure in Dersim, especially recently, noting the recruitment of informers has taken on a new dimension: “Unfortunately, the state has made this the prevailing policy in Dersim. We demand that this humiliating and degrading practice be abandoned.”

On behalf of the students of Munzur University, Murat Aydın read out a statement and said, “Patriotic students who are promoting the democratic struggle are being pressured, threatened, bullied, harassed and attempts are being made to keep them off campus by recruiting informers. We hereby bring to public attention the policy of threats and coercion in the recruitment of informers against our friends. In recent times, there has been repeated harassment of students at Munzur University and they are being asked to come to meetings with the authorities. When students refuse, threats and pressure are used to try to put them in fear. The Palace Regime knows it is finished and hopes to oppose our struggle through brute force. It thinks it can intimidate us with its spying and assimilation policies and attacks. These efforts are in vain, we will continue to resist the whole policy of oppression and intimidation with the strength we draw from our history.”



Body of Martyr Arjin Xwînda Gabar given to her family after a 5 months wait

ANF | 14 DECEMBER 2022

The body of Arjîn Xwînda Gabar (Hediye Süer), who fell as a martyr on 27 July during the war between the Turkish army and the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrillas in the Bagok Mountain countryside in the Nusaybin district of Mardin, was given to her family after a wait of 5 months.

After the DNA sample given by her family matched, the body of guerrilla Süer, which was found in the Cemetery of the nameless in Artuklu district, was taken out and delivered after the family waited until late hours for the place where she was buried.

Süer's body was taken to the Viranşehir district of Urfa in a funeral vehicle rented by her family.



Police take 9 people into custody in Mersin

ANF | MERSIN | 14 DECEMBER 2022

Mersin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office issued a detention warrant for 12 people, including Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Akdeniz and Toroslar district co-chairs and former executives.

Police raided many addresses in the morning hours. After the houses were searched, Toroslar Municipality's CHP Assembly Member H.B, HDP Akdeniz District Co-chair N.E, HDP Toroslar District Co-chair İ.D, HDP district administrators G.B, S.M. and Z.A., M.H., S.O. and F.A. were detained.

HDP Mersin provincial administrator E.A, Akdeniz district administrator E.E. and Toroslar district executive H.B. could not be found in their residence.



European Court of Justice dismisses PKK's objection against "terror list"

ANF | LUXEMBOURG | 14 DECEMBER 2022

The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg has announced its decision on the PKK's objection to the European Union's "terrorist organization" lists after 2020.

In its decision on Wednesday, the court claimed that, "The fact that the pleas alleging infringement are in part well-founded, infringement of the obligation to state reasons and infringement of the rights of the defense and of the right to effective judicial protection cannot lead to the annulment of the contested measures."

While the court dismissed the PKK's objection to the list, it ordered each party to bear its own costs.

On November 30, the Court of Justice of the European Union announced its decision in the lawsuit brought by the PKK to be removed from the lists of "terrorist organizations" between 2014 and 2020. Although the court had ruled in a previous decision that the PKK could not be put onto the list, it did not revoke the list, which was automatically updated with the same arguments.

Background

After the German state put the PKK onto its list of banned organizations on November 26, 1993, a new security concept was introduced around the world following the attack on the Twin Towers in the USA in 2001.

The European Union created its own list in December of the same year as part of the “combating terrorism” imposed by the USA. The PKK was thus included in the list in 2002.

Since 2014, the European Court of Justice has dealt with several cases concerning the PKK. A 2018 ruling by the Court canceled the lists between 2014 and 2017.

The court thus found the arguments for listing the PKK as “inadequate” and ruled that the group could not be included in the list.

The EU appealed against this decision. Immediately after, the UK asked in 2018 to keep the PKK on the list, and the PKK was automatically relisted on January 9, 2018, based on the same arguments. Thereupon, the Kurdish side filed a lawsuit against the new list on March 7 the same year.

The objection of the Council of Europe to the previous decision and the case files against the new lists were merged, and the first hearing was held on March 31, 2022.

At the hearing on March 31, the Court of Justice criticized the Council of Europe and reacted to the “copy-paste” defense that included the same arguments despite the cancellation of the previous lists.



HDP calls for international action against extradition of Kurdish refugees

ANF | 14 DECEMBER 2022

HDP (Peoples’ Democratic Party) Co-spokespersons for Foreign Affairs, Feleknas Uca and Hişyar Özsoy, released a statement raising concern over deals made in violation of international law, the humanitarian law on refugees as a result of Turkey’s foreign policy towards Europe and the West.

The HDP statement released on Wednesday includes the following:

“Turkish foreign policy towards Europe and the West, in general, has been marked with different forms of threats and blackmailing over the last few years. One recent example of such policy is Turkey’s threatening to prevent the membership of Finland and Sweden to NATO with the claim that these two countries support organizations that Turkey views as terrorists, namely the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and Peoples’ Protection Units (YPG).

Turkey, Sweden, and Finland met in Madrid and signed a trilateral memorandum on 28 June 2022 to address Turkey’s “security concerns,” including Turkey’s pending extradition requests for “terror suspects.” As a result of this agreement and in clear violation of international law, on December 2, Sweden extradited a Kurdish refugee, Mahmut Tat, who was sentenced in Turkey on terrorism-related charges.

Mahmut Tat was a bus driver in Dersim (Tunceli), a Kurdish city in Turkey. In 2015, he was given a prison sentence of six years and ten months for terrorism-related charges. Upon receiving this sentence, he sought asylum in Sweden. Three years after applying for asylum, Tat was invited by Sweden's immigration agency and told that his application had been rejected and taken over by the Swedish intelligence agency. According to Tat, Swedish authorities told him that he was a "dangerous" person for their country because Turkey wanted him. However, he said in his defense that all he had done was to take part in "two democratic protests" in Turkey, and these protests have resulted in accusations of terrorism. After the extradition, Tat was arrested in İstanbul on 3 December. Tat was not even on the list of people whom the Turkish government wants to be extradited.

Joining democratic protests surely is not a crime, but it has been so in Turkey since the government's termination of the peace process with the Kurdish movement in 2015. Since then, the political activities of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which is the third-biggest party representing about 6 million voters in the Turkish parliament, have been unlawfully criminalized as "supporting terrorism." Many Kurds have been arrested for simply joining regular activities of the HDP, democratic and peaceful protests, or even for posting a message critical of the government on Facebook or Twitter.

After the abortive coup in July 2016, Turkey was ruled under emergency rule for two years. Emergency rule was formally lifted in July 2018, yet emergency rule practices such as arbitrary detentions, torture, bans on peaceful protests, violations of freedom of expression and freedom of the press continue in the country in full force. In this process, over 80,000 citizens of Turkey, including more than 6,000 Kurdish citizens – HDP's co-chairs, several members of parliament, over one hundred elected mayors, trade unionists, civil society representatives, journalists, academics, lawyers, activists, and students—have been arrested with groundless terrorism-related charges. There is no separation of powers, no independent judiciary, and no conditions for fair trial in Turkey. With the pretext of fighting terrorism and coup plotters, the government has been using a thoroughly politicized and militant judiciary to silence the democratic opposition, arresting HDP's politicians and activists in particular, with terrorism-related charges and arbitrary decisions. Additionally, as various independent human rights organizations as well as organs of the Council of Europe (CoE) and the United Nations have documented, many of these people were tortured. The Committee for the Prevention of Torture and various human rights organizations have repeatedly reported that there are systematic rights violations and torture in Turkish prisons.

Turkey has become a country where all kinds of democratic protest and criticism against the government are treated as "terrorist crimes". Turkey's anti-terrorism laws, which were already anti-democratic, have been amended, widening even further the scope of what is considered as terrorism so that every critical voice against the government can be labeled as a terrorist activity. The fact that the definition of terrorism is so comprehensive and vague has been frequently referred to in Turkey's membership negotiations with the EU, and Turkey has been asked to amend its counter-terrorism law in line with EU standards. Reports by the European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe have all criticized the arbitrary detention of government opponents on vague terrorism-related charges. Also, the ECtHR has convicted Turkey countless times for such detentions, most recently in the cases of former HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş and HDP deputies versus Turkey.

Given this political context and background, it is so sad and shameful that a country such as Sweden, which has been one of the building blocks of European democracy, adopted an inhumane attitude in the face of Turkey's threats. The Kurds and pro-democracy people in Turkey and abroad have received the

news of Mr. Tat's extradition with disappointment. Setting aside values such as democracy and human rights, on which the EU and the CoE were built, and making deals in violation of international law, the humanitarian law on refugees in particular, do not simply hurt the Kurds. If not prevented, such erosion of democratic values and international law will corrupt and destroy European democratic values and institutions from the inside.

We call upon the international community not to remain silent in the face of such a sacrifice of Kurdish people once again for geopolitical concerns and considerations. Relevant authorities in the EU, CoE and the UN should take concrete action to stop such unabashed violations of international law and every convention on human rights. And we invite all democratic and progressive forces in Sweden, Finland and broader Europe to support and be in solidarity with Kurdish refugees.

The safety and security that Sweden and Finland rightfully want for their citizens is also a right for the Kurdish people. And to put it simply and bluntly, no Kurd who is critical of the Turkish government feels safe and secure in Turkey, particularly in Turkish prisons. This is rightfully so.”

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Journalist Sinan Aygül imprisoned

ANF | BITLIS | 14 DECEMBER 2022

Kurdish journalist Sinan Aygül has been arrested in Bitlis. The chairman of the Bitlis Journalists' Association is accused of incitement of the people because of a post published on Twitter on Tuesday evening about sexual violence against a fourteen-year-old girl by Turkish security forces. Aygül retracted the post himself shortly after it was published and apologized for it because it was not sufficiently substantiated. Only three hours later, the police arrived and searched his flat. Aygül also informed the police about this on Twitter. After his detention and a public prosecutor's hearing, he was brought before the court and remanded in custody.

The latest tweet of the Kurdish journalist says: “It is not journalists who should be arrested first. It is assaulter and rapists who need to be arrested. Journalism is not a crime.”

A “disinformation law” was introduced in Turkey in October. Spreading “false or misleading news” is punishable by up to three years in prison. The new “press law” criminalizes any remaining critical reporting under the pretext of stopping the spread of false information. More precisely, anyone who “spreads untrue information concerning internal and external security, public order and general health with the aim of creating concern, fear, or panic among the population and disturbing social peace” is to be punished. De facto, this means that any person who spreads information disagreeable to the government on social networks can potentially be prosecuted. Apart from newspapers, radio and television, the new law is mainly directed against digital networks and online media.

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288 people murdered during Cizre blockade commemorated

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 14 DECEMBER 2022

The Association for Culture, Aid, Solidarity with Families that Lost Their Relatives in the Cradle of Mesopotamia (MEBYA-DER) made a press statement to mark the 7th anniversary of the murder of 288 people during the Turkish state forces' genocidal attacks in the Cizre district of Şırnak in 2015. The families who lost their relatives during the "curfews", members of the Free Women's Movement (TJA), the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) Şırnak Provincial Organization, HDP administrators, the Peace Mothers Assembly and numerous other people joined the press briefing in front of HDP's Cizre district office.

HDP Şırnak Provincial Organization Co-Chair Abdullah Güngen said that they would not forget the Cizre blockade.

MEBYA-DER Şırnak Branch Co-Chair Serhat Küçük read out the statement behind a black banner reading "We will not forget the 14 December Cizre blockade".

Nearly 300 people killed

Küçük recalled the massacres in the basements of Cizre and stated, "The city blockades imposed as part of the 'curfew' in 2015 and 2016 were recorded as the most serious unlawfulness, human rights violations and brutality in these lands. The city blockades that started in the cities of Kurdistan on August 16, 2015, gained new momentum following the blockade of Cizre on December 14, 2015. These aggressive and fascist practices led to a massive destruction, humanitarian crisis and brutality in our besieged cities. Cizre was the most devastated city during these blockades. During the 3-month blockade in Cizre, nearly 300 people, including elderly, women and children, lost their lives and hundreds of people were injured. Thousands of houses were damaged, and tens of thousands of people were displaced."

Küçük noted that the dead bodies of people killed by state forces could not be reached and retrieved for days, which gave pain to their families. "We know very well that although the bans were introduced in 2015, the massacres took place as part of the 'Collapse Plan' which was introduced by the government during the National Security Council meeting on October 30, 2014. While the anti-Kurdish policies killed people, the living spaces of people were also burned and destroyed. People were forced to migrate. The families of those killed during the blockades could not reach the corpses for days. Dozens of dead people were buried in cemeteries of the nameless without informing the families. Moreover, dozens of bodies were kept in morgues for months for getting DNA samples, which further agonized the families."

Küçük noted that the trials were not conducted fairly: "All attempts to bring these crimes before domestic and international courts have remained inconclusive. As of today, 63 cases are pending before the Constitutional Court. 6 cases will be sent to the ECtHR since domestic remedies have been exhausted. 30 cases have been dismissed. 8 cases have remained inconclusive since DNA samples did not match. 20 cases are pending. All the crimes committed during the blockade were legitimized by the AKP-MHP government. We do not accept these unfair trials. We will continue our struggle for justice until those responsible receive the punishment they deserve before an independent judiciary. We urge democratic public opinion to support the legal struggle of the people of Cizre. Those responsible must be held accountable."



CHP Mayor of Istanbul faces prison sentence and ban on political activity

ANF | ISTANBUL | 14 DECEMBER 2022

The mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, has been sentenced to two years, seven months and 15 days imprisonment for insulting members of the Turkish election committee. The CHP (Republican People's Party) politician also faces a ban on political activity.

The background to the proceedings is the municipal elections in Istanbul, which İmamoğlu won in March 2019 against the AKP candidate Binali Yıldırım. The election result was annulled under pressure from the Turkish government and the election was repeated three months later. While İmamoğlu was ahead by just under 14,000 votes in the first election, he even had a lead of around 800,000 votes in June.

After the annulment of the first election, İmamoğlu criticised the process at a Council of Europe congress in Strasbourg. In response, Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu called him an idiot at a police event in Ankara. When a television journalist asked İmamoğlu on camera for a statement on the matter, he replied that the idiots were those who had annulled the ballot.

The verdict against Ekrem İmamoğlu is not yet final. If the Court of Cassation, as the highest instance, confirms the conviction, the CHP politician will be removed from his position as mayor and will no longer be allowed to run in any elections. Parliamentary and presidential elections will be held in Turkey in 2023.



RSF: A record total of 533 journalists are jailed worldwide

ANF | 14 DECEMBER 2022

A record total of 533 journalists are currently detained worldwide, according to the annual round-up of violence and abuses against journalists published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF). The number of those killed has increased again this year – to 57– while 65 journalists are being held hostage and 49 are missing.

Last year's record has been broken again. The total of 533 journalists being held in connection with their work on 1 December was 13.4% higher than last year's figure. RSF has also never previously seen so many women journalists in detention. A total of 78 are currently held, a record-breaking rise of nearly 30% compared to 2021. Women now account for nearly 15% of detained journalists, compared to fewer than 7% five years ago.

China, where censorship and surveillance have reached extreme levels, continues to be the world's biggest jailer of journalists, with a total of 110 currently being held.

Also, a sign of major repression, the Islamic Republic of Iran, with 47 detainees, became the world's third-biggest jailer of journalists just one month after the onset of massive protests. Among the first journalists detained were two women, Nilufar Hamedi and Elahe Mohammadi, who had helped draw attention to the death of the young Iranian Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini. They now face the death penalty.

In Turkey, 3 women journalists and a female media worker have been in provisional detention since June 2022, when pro-Kurdish media outlets and production companies faced a new wave of arrests for their alleged support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), regarded as a terrorist organization by the Turkish government. Among them was Jin News agency director Safiye Alagas, who, in 2019, had already been arrested and accused of "propaganda for a terrorist organization" before being acquitted.

Even if Syria's civil war has let up in intensity, it continues to take its toll on media personnel. Two journalists were killed while covering clashes between militias and the Islamic State, while the latest victim, Isam Eblella, a reporter for the AHNA news agency in Syrian Kurdistan, was killed by one of the airstrikes launched by Turkey against the Kurdish groups in northern Syria and Iraq that it blames for a terrorist bombing in Istanbul on 13 November.

The number of journalists killed has also risen. A total of 57 paid with their lives for their commitment to report the news in 2022 – an 18.8% increase compared to 2021, after a two-year period of relative calm and historically low figures. The war that broke out in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 is one of the reasons for this rise. Eight journalists were killed in the first six months of the war.

Meanwhile, more than 60% of journalists killed lost their lives in countries considered to be at peace in 2022. Eleven were murdered in Mexico alone – nearly 20% of the overall number of journalists killed worldwide.

The 2022 round-up also reports that at least 65 journalists and media workers are currently being held hostage.

"Dictatorial and authoritarian regimes are filling their prisons faster than ever by jailing journalists. This new record in the number of detained journalists confirms the pressing and urgent need to resist these unscrupulous governments and to extend our active solidarity to all those who embody the ideal of journalistic freedom, independence and pluralism," said Christophe Deloire, RSF Secretary-General.

Police take documentary director and journalist Sibel Tekin into custody

ANF | ANKARA | 16 DECEMBER 2022

The house of documentary director and journalist Sibel Tekin in Ankara was raided by the police. As part of an investigation carried out by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, Tekin's two computers, many hard disks containing documentary works, cameras and some books were confiscated.

After the searches, Tekin was taken into custody without being even allowed to change her clothes and was taken to the Ankara Security Directorate.

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Lawsuit against Human Rights Association co-chair Eren Keskin

ANF | 16 DECEMBER 2022

The interview given to the Mesopotamia Agency (MA) by Abdulillah Poyraz, the father of Deniz Poyraz, who was murdered as a result of the armed attack carried out by the racist Onur Gencer against the HDP Izmir Provincial Organization, was cited as the reason for filing a lawsuit.

Eren Keskin, the co-chair of the Human Rights Association (IHD), reacted to the lawsuit filed against Abdülillah Poyraz with the allegation of "making propaganda for a terrorist organization" on her social media account.

According to the information received, the same prosecutor who opened an investigation against Abdülillah Poyraz also filed a criminal complaint against Keskin.

Following the completion of the investigation, an indictment was prepared against Keskin and was accepted by the Izmir Heavy Penal Court. The first hearing of the case will be held on 23 February.

In the indictment, a prison sentence of 3 months to 5 years is demanded for Keskin.

Keskin wrote on her Twitter account: "Another lawsuit has been filed against me at the High Criminal Court for sharing the statement of the father of Deniz Poyraz, the young woman who was murdered by a racist killer."

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Bekaert metalworkers in Kocaeli continue their strike

ZEYNEP KURAY | ISTANBUL | 17 DECEMBER 2022

The strike at the Steel Cord Factory of Belgium-based Bekaert in Kocaeli continues with determination. Bekaert workers, who do not recognize the decision of Turkish President Erdogan to prevent the strike, which he announced at midnight saying that “it is disrupting national security”, have been resisting for 5 days. After an agreement could not be reached in the collective bargaining negotiations that started in July, 400 workers organized in the United Metal-İş Union of DİSK, which went on strike on 13 December. They said that they would resist until the demand for an hourly wage of 100 TL (around 5 euro) was accepted. Speaking to ANF, the workers emphasized: “We have lit the shepherd's fire, shame on those who try to extinguish it.”

‘World’s biggest factory pays us 100 TL per hour’

A worker on strike, who did not want to be named, said that with the deepening economic crisis, their salaries also decreased, and they had become insufficient to live. He said that they work 8 hours, 6 days a week and noted that they receive an average of 8 thousand-10 thousand TL (400-500 euros), but this is not enough. Reminding that they started the strike with the demand for an hourly wage of 100 TL, the worker said that the boss did not agree to this, and that the employer offered 65 TL per hour in the latest negotiations.

The worker said: “The work we do is not simple. We manufacture the steel courts found in automobile tires and ship them from there to all tire factories in the world. After working in the factory for 3 years, you can finally master this job. In other words, it is a difficult job which requires skills. This factory where we work in Izmit is the world's largest steel court manufacturer. However, they paid us very little. I am a father of two, and I have a responsibility to feed them. I will not let anyone violate my rights.”

‘Our answer to the prohibition will be here and at the ballot box’

The worker said that they were surprised when they heard about the ban on the strike, and added that the resistance has been going on for months. He said that they kept their activities to a minimum during the negotiations, but they went on strike when no results were achieved. Underlining that the right to strike is a legal right, the worker said that they will use this right to the end. Emphasizing that all 400 workers are determined on this issue, the worker said: “We will continue our resistance with determination, and we will give the necessary response to the prohibition both with the resistance here and at the ballot box.”

‘We worked even during the Covid-19 pandemic’

Another worker, who did not want to be named, explained that they never stopped production during the Covid-19 pandemic and that they worked while everyone was at home. Pointing out that they are a factory that broke a record in production during the pandemic, the worker said: “We worked non-stop dur-

ing the pandemic, and we did not receive any customer complaints during those 3 years. We didn't deserve this.”

Gökhan Taşyürek, who has been the worker representative at the factory for 6 years, said that the workers brought the factory to this high standard, but today their demands were not met. “This is a sapling that we have carefully planted and watered for years, but the employer wants to uproot this sapling,” said Taşyürek.

Reminding that workers doing the same job in Belgium receive much higher wages, Taşyürek noted that they do not accept this inequality. “The wage we demand is one quarter of the minimum wage in Belgium.”

‘We will continue to struggle’

Taşyürek said that this was not their first strike. They struggled in 2011, and they went on strike again in 2016. Explaining that the use of an unrealistic excuse such as “threat to national security” against the strike caused a great reaction among the workers, Taşyürek said: “There are, of course, workers who voted for the AKP in this factory, and this situation offended them. They are protesting as well. We will continue our struggle until we get 100 TL per hour.”

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Dozens detained in political extermination campaign in Amed

ANF | AMED | 17 DECEMBER 2022

Nearly twenty people were taken into custody in Amed (tr. Diyarbakir) in the early morning today. The Turkish police stormed numerous flats and abused those present. The detentions were apparently made on the basis of a denunciation. Several flat doors were broken open with battering rams and the interiors were vandalized by the police.

One of those detained is photographer Suphi Orhan, who was abused during the arrest. Muhsin Acar, who was also taken into custody, had his nose broken, and his face is covered in haematomas. Photos of a bloody carpet from the flat bear witness to the police violence. Orhan’s family said: “There was a knock on the door, and we opened it. The police came in immediately. We had to lie down on the floor. Muhsin was taken to one room, we to another. We could hear his voice. They broke his nose. There are traces of blood on the carpet. They said there was an arrest warrant and took Muhsin away. The flat was searched for two hours.”

Apart from Suphi Orhan and Muhsin Acar, Mazlum Kardaş, Fermandar Kardaş and Sohbet Yıldız were detained, while the names of the others involved are not yet known. What the detainees are accused of is also not known as the file is under secrecy.

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MKM concert in Istanbul banned by Turkish authorities

ANF | ISTANBUL | 17 DECEMBER 2022

In order to counter a “danger to public safety and order”, Istanbul’s Küçükçekmece district governorate has banned a concert planned for this Saturday evening by the Mesopotamia Cultural Center (MKM). The reason given by the authorities in their ban order is “serious concerns” about the event with the allegation that the concert could open up “room for criminal offenses”, as it was assumed that it would be accompanied by “propaganda for a terrorist organization” and “provocative actions”. “In order to avert this as far as possible and to exclude the risk that peace, security and welfare in our district will be affected as well as to prevent crime and protect the rights and freedoms of our citizen, the concert had to be prohibited,” argued the district governorate.

The district governorates actions drew criticism from the MKM board. “They do not tolerate Kurdish and, in their racist delusion, rededicate the mother tongue of a people of 40 million into a security threat,” the organization said in a statement. Preparations for the concert had been going on for months—on the occasion of the 31st anniversary of the founding of the MKM. It was to take place in the sold-out Performing Arts Center YKB under the slogan “Em ê Bêjin! The title was formulated as a declaration of war in view of past bans on Kurdish cultural events, including the MKM anniversary concert in 2021. The administrative authority, which has summarily banned all events in public and closed spaces in the entire district for today, seems to have taken this to mean the same thing.

The MKM was unimpressed by the injunction and announced its intention to hold the anniversary concert despite the ban. “We will not be deterred by the oppressors,” the board of the cultural center declared in a public press statement in front of the Performing Arts Centre in Küçükçekmece on Saturday. The program includes both regionally known musicians and bands, but also international greats: Şahiya Stranan, Erdoğan Emir, Mehmet Atlı and the Rastak Ensemble from Iran. Instead of the YBK, the founding anniversary was to be celebrated at the premises of the district branch of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), it was said. Several dozen members of the MKM were among those who gathered in front of the building in protest against the ban on the event.

A large police force tried to stop the protest and broke up the meeting violently. At least 25 people were taken into custody and the artists are now in the Vatan police headquarters in the Fatih district, which is notorious for being a torture center. “The government’s hostility towards Kurds, their language, and their culture is omnipresent. Even a press statement is not tolerated by these rulers. But let it be said: they may well issue bans, but they cannot suppress our voice, nor will they succeed in stopping our dances,” said HDP deputy Musa Piroğlu, who has been confined to a wheelchair since a work accident at a construction site, as the only person left in a police encirclement. Meanwhile, those detained face charges of violating the Turkish Law of Assembly.

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.

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