

THE İMRALI POST

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

Issue № 21 / 30 September 2022 ★ Contact: imralipost@freeocalan.org

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Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

Yazidi women take over the vigil for Öcalan in Strasbourg

ANF | STRASBOURG | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

Since 25 June 2012, a permanent vigil has been held in front of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT). The activists are demanding an immediate intervention of the CPT for the lifting of Abdullah Öcalan's isolation and his release. This week, activists Fikriye Ferho, Zübeyde Xebat, Zero Ki-vağî, Sosin Kartal and Ayhan İğrek from the umbrella organisation of the Yazidi Women's Councils (Sîwana Meclîsa Jinên Êzidî, SMJÊ) took over the protest.

Fikriye Ferho said on behalf of the group: “We came here from Germany as members of the Yazidi Women's Councils Organization and took over the vigil two days ago. As Yazidi women, we see the commitment to the freedom of Rêber Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] as our most important task. We won our freedom on the basis of his ideas and thoughts. It is our duty to stand up for Rêber Apo. We strongly condemn his isolation. We will take to the streets and resist until Rêber Apo is free.”

Ferho pointed out that there has been no sign of life from İmralı for over a year and a half and asked, “Where are the institutions and organisations that pretend to protect human rights? Why are these organisations silent in the face of aggravated isolation?”



Lawyers of Öcalan submit another application to visit İmralı

ANF | ISTANBUL | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan's lawyers from Asrın Law Office, Raziye Öztürk, Rezan Sarıca, Faik Özgür Erol and Emran Emekçi, have once again applied to the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and the management of İmralı F-Type High Security Prison to meet with their client who has not been heard from for 19 months.

On March 14, 2021, rumours spread on social media claiming that Öcalan had died in prison. Immediately, protests were organised around the world demanding an urgent visit by the lawyers to İmralı.

On March 25, 2021, Öcalan was able to talk with his brother Mehmet Öcalan. The short phone conversation happened about a year after a previous call, on 27 April 2020, and it is the first time since then that Öcalan had actual contact with someone outside.

The phone conversation was held under the supervision of the Urfa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and was very short. The call was interrupted pretty soon. Likewise, the phone call by another prisoner on İmralı, Hamili Yıldırım, with his family was also abruptly interrupted. It was reported that the other two prisoners, Ömer Hayri Konar and Veysi Aktaş, did not make the phone call they were offered to protest isolation.

Lawyers of Öcalan were able to meet their client on May 2-22, June 12-18 and August 7, 2019, for the first time in 8 years. Since August 7, 2019, all applications have gone unanswered.

After Öcalan's lawyers applied to a Bursa court for an "urgent meeting" on November 22, it came out that two further bans had been issued against the Kurdish leader. The Bursa court rejected the application, citing a 6-month visitation dated October 12 as a reason.

The court also rejected the application of the families for a meeting with their relatives, citing a 3-month family visitation ban issued by the Disciplinary Board of the İmralı Penal Institution dated August 18, 2021.

The İmralı Delegation, which was able to hold talks with Öcalan within the framework of peace negotiations, has not been allowed to visit the prison island since April 2015. Since the last visit of the team of lawyers on August 7, 2019, the Turkish authorities have not responded to any of the continuous requests for visits.

The Turkish authorities use the "roadmap for negotiations" submitted to the European Court of Human Rights in 2009 as the justification for the ban on visits by Abdullah Öcalan's team of lawyers.

On the other hand, the investigation launched in 2012 against lawyers of Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan, Rezan Sarıca, Ali Maden, Baran Doğan, Cengiz Yürekli, İnan Akmeşe, Mahmut Taşçı and Mehmet Selim Okçuoğlu, was picked up again at the beginning of 2021.

The lawyers went to the prosecutor's office and gave a statement. After the statements were taken, the indictment prepared by the prosecutor's office was accepted by the Istanbul 33rd High Criminal Court. Lawyers are accused, among other things, of “membership of a terrorist organization”, and they are expected to appear in court in September.

In the indictment, where lawyer meetings with Öcalan were shown as a criminal element, the lawyers' refusal to accept the accusations against them was also cited as a criminal element. In addition, while lawyer Cengiz Yürekli's use of his right to remain silent was shown as an element of crime, phone calls made by detainees with their families due to their profession were also considered a crime.

The most interesting subject of accusation in the indictment was that statements such as “isolation is being applied to Öcalan” and “lawyers have not been allowed to see him for 300 days” were cited as criminal elements. These were sentences contained in statements made by the lawyers to the press.



Prisons in Turkey

Hunger striker Sibel Balaç sent to prison again

ANF | ANKARA | 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

People's Law Office said that Sibel Balaç, who went on a death fast on 29 December 2021 and was transferred to Ankara Dışkapı Yıldırım Beyazıt Hospital on 9 September 2022, was sent back to Bakırköy Closed Prison.

Balaç has been on death fast demanding a fair trial, as well as the release of ill prisoners and an end to the violations of rights in prisons.

The People's Law Office, which provided information about Balaç on Twitter, said that despite a report stating that their client cannot stay in a cell alone, the prison administration has put her in a cell by herself: “You are committing a crime. – wrote the lawyers - Free our client immediately.”



HDP MP Semra Güzel held in solitary cell since her arrest three weeks ago

ANF | ISTANBUL | 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) MP Semra Güzel has been held incommunicado in the Silivri prison complex since her detention. This was announced by her defence lawyer Veysel Eski, who criticised the treatment of the politician as “torture”. Eski said that Güzel had made three requests to be placed in a communal cell since she was placed in the prison near Istanbul more than three weeks ago. “But so far there has been no written response from the prison management. However, she has been told verbally that her applications have no chance of success.

Güzel is not letting it get her down and is in good health, according to Eski. However, denied contact with other inmates as well as with forms of employment is a burden. Objects for individual detention room equipment such as a radio or television were not handed over to her without giving reasons. Several books that had been sent to Güzel after her arrest have only recently been received. These are “arbitrary measures” against which Eski intends to appeal.

Semra Güzel was arrested on 3 September on charges of being a member of a “terrorist organisation” - meaning the PKK. During her arrest the day before in Istanbul, which was accompanied by pro-government media, she was mistreated by the police. In a martially-presented video footage, two female officers of the anti-terror units could be seen pulling the hair of the MP, whose hands were tied behind her back, and trying to press her head down on her way to the obligatory health check. The HDP described this as “torture”, stating that it was a pathetic attempt by a minister known for his links to organised crime to humiliate the politician by forcibly bending her head. “The mistreatment of Semra Güzel, who is still a member of the Turkish parliament, is nothing more than an unmistakable sign of weakness in political power,” the co-chair of the party, Pervin Buldan, said.

Semra Güzel is a trained medical doctor and was elected to the Turkish National Assembly in 2018 as the HDP candidate for the Amed (tr. Diyarbakır) constituency.

Last March, her parliamentary immunity was lifted in a procedure that was unusually quick by Turkish standards. The basis was two preliminary investigation reports from the public prosecutor's office that had been submitted to the Ministry of Justice shortly beforehand. The starting point for the allegations made in it, which are also the basis of the criminal proceedings against Güzel, are photos showing her with her former fiancé, guerrilla Volkan Bora (Koçero Meletî), who died in air raids in Adıyaman in April 2017. The photos were taken in a southern Kurdish guerrilla camp in 2014, when an HDP delegation visited the PKK as part of the peace process with the knowledge of the state to discuss further steps towards de-escalation.

Military aggression and occupation

Turkish gendarmerie kills a civilian in Idlib countryside

ANF | 24 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported the killing of a civilian by Turkish forces in the countryside of Idlib province.

Accordingly, the Turkish gendarmerie (military police) shot a man while he was near the border on the side of Khirbat Al-Jooz in the western Idlib countryside.

According to the observatory, the number of civilians who have been killed by Turkish Gendarmerie (Jan-darma) in several areas near and on the Syria-Turkey border since early 2022 has risen to 18, including three children and one woman, while 24 other civilians were injured, including three children.



HPG: Two Kurdish revolutionaries were extradited from Armenia to Turkey

ANF | BEHDINAN | 24 SEPTEMBER 2022

According to the press centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG), “Leheng and Alişer” have been extradited from Armenia to Turkey. The HPG thus contradicts reports in the Turkish media, which reported on a successful foreign operation of the intelligence service MIT.

“Comrades Leheng and Alişer encountered forces of the Armenian state in the border area with Armenia in August 2021 and acted prudently to prevent a negative situation. However, they were arrested, detained and charged. Our friends fought legally and were brought before the Armenian Court of Appeal on 23 February 2022, which decided to release them. According to international and Armenian law, they should have been released. Instead, they were abducted and detained by the Armenian secret service. Although they were promised release after initiatives were taken, they were extradited from Armenia to Turkey about a month ago,” the HPG said.

“A disgrace for Armenia”

In doing so, Armenia has violated international legal norms and its own laws, HPG stated: “To hand over Kurdish revolutionaries, who fight for the existence and freedom of their people and empathise with the

pain of all oppressed peoples, in this way to the state of Turkey, which is aiming at genocide, is a disgrace for Armenia. Our two comrades have fallen into the hands of the Turkish state in this way. However, in the special war media of the Turkish state, the operation is presented as a very successful MIT operation.”

The HPG also reported that two more persons have been extradited from Iraq to Turkey. In a statement on 14 September, the HPG press centre denied Turkish reporting on an alleged MIT operation in Maxmur Camp in which two PKK members were captured. According to the statement, this report by the Turkish special war media lacked any basis and was designed to portray Turkish intelligence as successful and to distract attention from the heavy losses suffered by the army in the war in Kurdistan. The two people allegedly captured, Hatip and Aria, had already separated from the Kurdish liberation movement in July. This was also confirmed by the People's Council of Maxmur. As the HPG said, these persons ended up in the hands of the Iraqi state and were extradited by it to Turkey “due to profit interests”. “It is obvious that the success stories about MIT designed with false scenarios at the table do not correspond to reality. The peoples of Kurdistan and Turkey must not believe the lies of the MIT,” HPG said.



Armenian MP Manukyan condemns handing over of two HPG guerrillas to Turkey

ANF | 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

Armenian parliamentarian Gegham Manukyan shared photos of two guerrillas named Atilla Çiçek and Hüseyin Yıldırım, who were handed over to the Turkish state, in a statement published on the “168.am” website and Facebook page, and said that they were “two Kurdish freedom fighters, revolutionaries, who fought for the liberation of their own people, fought against Turkish oppression.”

Pointing out that Dersim was one of the areas where the guerrillas were fighting, Manukyan said: “Many of our citizens were saved thanks to the Kurds during the Armenian Genocide in Dersim. Now, after they appeared on the territory of the Republic of Armenia, they were abducted and handed over to the genocidal Turkish authorities, the sponsor of the Azerbaijani aggression, who nowadays is an active participant in the 44-day war against our country.”

'Not an Armenian government. They are occupants'

Reminding that there was a court decision regarding the release of both guerrillas, Manukyan addressed the Kurds: “Forgive us, my brothers, for the Armenians handing your children over to Turkey, where they will be tortured. Now we do not have an Armenian government. They are enemy forces invading our country.”

The parliamentarian added: “Armenia has never carried out such a betrayal in thirty years. There was no such thing in those years.”

Manuykan reacted to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government, saying that “he already gave everything to the Turks.”

'Forgive me for betrayal'

Expressing his concern that “the heroes of the Artsakh (Upper Karabakh) war will come next”, Manukyan pointed out that Nikol Pashinyan may meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Prague on 6 October.

“He gave a present to the Turks,” Manukyan said, adding; “Now he will even meet them to hand out the Motherland. Forgive me, my brothers, for treason (...) We will get rid of this occupation government.”

Iranian regime renews attacks on Biradost and Balekayeti

ANF | 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

According to Rojnews, the Iranian regime launched an attack on the mountains in the Biradost and Balekayeti areas of the Hewler province in South Kurdistan.

In Balekayeti, the mountain skirts of Hergurd and Çixi, which are affiliated to Çoman, are bombed.

The Iranian regime bombed the Biradost region on Saturday.



Self-defense workshop of the Northern and Eastern Syria Young Women's Union begins in Heseke

ANF | HESEKE | 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

The workshop of the Northern and Eastern Syria Young Women's Union started at the Serdem Hall in Heseke with the participation of 60 young women, Kongra Star members and YPJ fighters.

The workshop is organized with the slogan “Young women defend themselves through the revolutionary people's war and defeat violence and occupation”.

In the workshop the importance of self-defense for young women and methods of combating violence, rape and prostitution are emphasized.



Turkish drone attacks centre of Kobanê

ANF | KOBANE | 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

According to the ANHA news agency, Turkey attacked the city centre of Kobanê with a drone at 7.15 am local time this morning. According to reports, the bombing caused damage to property.

In recent weeks and months, the Turkish state has escalated its drone war against Rojava. Last Tuesday, two villagers were killed in a Turkish drone strike near Ain Issa, and five SDF and YPG fighters were killed the previous Friday. Meanwhile, artillery shelling also continues unabated. Such attacks on the civilian population constitute war crimes, but are apparently not punished for political reasons.

In the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria, 27 people were killed in Turkish drone attacks in August, including eight minors.



Regime soldier injured in attack in Zirgan

ANF | ZIRGAN | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

A regime soldier was injured in the shelling of the town of Zirgan in northern Syria on Monday evening. The soldier suffered multiple injuries and had to be taken to hospital. Among other things, he was hit by shrapnel to the head and face.

The attack came from Turkish jihadist occupation forces and targeted a Syrian regime army post on the outskirts of the village of Bobî, northwest of Zirgan. Artillery shells also hit the neighbouring village of Dada Abdal. Apart from property damage, no damage was caused.

Earlier in the day, the occupying forces bombed civilian settlement areas in Til Temir and Afrin. In the Khabur valley, the village of al-Dardara was hit by the attacks, and in Afrin, Turkish jihadist artillery repeatedly targeted the village of Bêne in the not fully occupied district of Şêrawa. There was no reliable information about the full extent of the attack, but according to the latest information, there were no casualties.



Occupation forces prevent people from harvesting fruit and olive in Afrin

ANF | AFRIN | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Shera and Sherawa districts of Afrin border on the territories occupied by Turkey and thus on a war front. The Turkish troops and their mercenaries open fire on everything that moves along the border strip. Further afield, artillery shells are hitting at random. In this death strip, farming is practically impossible. The olives and fruit on trees dry up and rot or the trees burn because of the attacks.

Mines, rockets and shots against farmers

According to the Agricultural Committee of the Sherawa District Council, there are 149,000 fruit trees in these strips. These are 99,000 olive trees and 50,000 pomegranate trees. In addition, 3,550 hectares of agricultural land where vital grains such as wheat and barley used to be grown can no longer be cultivated. If they try nevertheless, they are immediately fired upon by the occupying forces. Sometimes rockets or grenades, but also mines, are used against the farmers. The villages most affected are Zoq al-Kabir, Kelutiye, Burj al-Qas, Soxanekê, Aqibê, Bêne and Tinib.

People are deprived of their livelihood

Ismail Ehmed, from Bêne village in Sherawa district, cannot harvest his crops and take care of and harvest his trees because of the attacks of the occupation forces. Ehmed owned 3,000 trees, of which 2,000 were confiscated by the occupation forces. He was left with only a third, which he is also unable to tend due to the attacks. He speaks of daily attacks and recalls that he has not been able to harvest olives for four years.

Yahya Nebo has 200 olive trees. He reports shelling and mines being laid on farmland and laments, “These trees are our livelihood, we live off them. But now we have difficulties. Because the mercenaries prevent us from harvesting the olives with their attacks.”



YRK reports simultaneous attacks by Turkey and Iran

ANF | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Eastern Kurdistan Forces (YRK) Command released a statement concerning the armed drone attack that targeted the Asos region on September 26.

“The invasion attacks on Kurdistan have escalated in recent months. Since the Kurdistan guerrillas have been putting up outstanding resistance against the Turkish invasion in Zap, Avaşin and Metina, frustrating

the Turkish occupation, attacks are being carried out in four parts of Kurdistan. In this scope, our Eastern Kurdistan Forces have also faced air strikes numerous times,” the statement released on Tuesday said.

“On September 26, from 10:00 to 17:00, two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) flew over the Asos region, which was then shelled by Turkish fighter jets, alongside the countryside of the Gelalê village, 15 times between 15:00 and 16:00.

Our forces did not suffer any loss as a result of these attacks, while the gardens and fields of the patriotic local people were damaged.

The people of East Kurdistan and Iran rose up once again on September 16 against the Iranian invasion. The Iranian regime killed dozens of people that took part in the uprising, while it, on the other hand, carried out attacks against the movements and forces of Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan).

As the Eastern Kurdistan Forces, we regard the people's uprising in Rojhilat and Iran as legitimate and condemn the regime's attacks on civilians. We want these murderous attacks to be stopped and pro-democracy people to enjoy their rights.

The public is concerned as the invasion attacks by the Turkish state and Iran take place simultaneously. The public and our people should be aware of the current situation and act carefully against these attacks.”



Mercenary militia abducts five people in Afrin

ANF | AFRIN | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

Almost every day, civilians are abducted under various pretexts by the occupying forces and especially by mercenaries hired by Turkey in Afrin. For mercenary groups like the Sultan Murad Brigade, abductions have become a profitable business model. Much of the groups' funding runs through ransom and robbery. As the ANHA news agency reports, the Sultan Murad Brigade has abducted five residents of the village of Qota in the district of Bilbile. The abductees are villagers Ahmed Reshid Mistefa, Aslan Shaban Seydo, Hamza Mistefa Mistefa, Abdulqadr Shaban Seydo and Mistefa Menan Seydo. It is unknown where they were taken.

The Human Rights Organisation Afrin-Syria has documented (as of December 2021) 686 killings of civilians and 8,455 abductions since the occupation of Afrin began in March 2018. About half of those abducted have disappeared to date, while another part continues to be held in torture centres. There are also repeated abductions to Turkey in violation of international law, where those affected are sentenced to many years in prison in terror trials.



KDP blocks European delegation's investigation into chemical weapons

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

Biologists Jan Van Aken and Josef Savari, members of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, visited the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to conduct an investigation into the use of chemical weapons in the region since the Halabja massacre.

The delegation visited the Kurdistan Region Parliament Office in Sulaymaniyah and held talks with the head of the office.

It is reported that the use of prohibited weapons in the Kurdistan Region was addressed at the meeting.

“We welcome the European delegation visiting the Kurdistan Region to investigate the chemical weapons used since the Halabja attack,” Kurdistan Region Parliament’s Peshmerga and Public Security Committee member Osman Sêderi said during a press conference after the meeting.

“Last week we visited the Anfal monument in Chamchamal and Halabja. We also tried to reach the villages of Hirur and Kani Masi after a visit to the town of Amiya,” said biologist Jan Aken, who has been researching chemical weapons for 25 years.

“According to some reports we obtained, chemical weapons are being used in this region. We also wanted to investigate and prepare a report on this issue. We wanted to talk to Haci Abdullah, who was a victim of chemical weapons, but the Amadiya district governor did not allow us and prevented us from conducting research,” the biologist added.

The European delegation called on the Kurdistan Regional Government to ask the United Nations to investigate the use of chemical weapons and to submit a report to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The delegation also asked the Kurdistan Regional Government to allow them to investigate the use of chemical weapons so that a massacre similar to Halabja would not take place in future.

— ★ —

Since the beginning of 2022, Turkey has launched at least 81 drone attack in north and east Syria.

MEDYANEWS | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

A Turkish drone strike on 27 September killed two co-chairs of a justice and reform office of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), Rojava Information Centre reported.

The drone hit a car on the road near Girkê Legê, across the border from Turkey's Şırnak (Şirnex) province. According to the RIC, the attack was the 81st drone strike in 2022.

Zeyneb Mihemed and Yılmaz Şero were co-chairs in the AANES justice bureau for northern Syria's Cizire region, according to the ANF.

On Wednesday, Turkish forces and their Syrian affiliates targeted four villages in the countryside in Zirgan. Two civilians were killed and five injured in the shelling of al-Mushayrfa, Khadrawi, al-Bobi, Dada Abdal and al-Asadiya villages, a military source told North Press.

According to the RIC, the two civilians who were killed were both 12 years old, while 3 and 13 year old minors were among the injured civilians.

"This was an explicit attack on key civilian workers in AANES's political structures," RIC said.



Turkish attack kills two people, wounds 5 in Mişêrfê

ANF | HESEKE | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Turkish state's attacks on Northern and Eastern Syria continue. The invaders bombarded the villages of Mişêrfê and Esediye in the Zirgan district to the west of Heseke with howitzers and mortars.

Nayif Ebdulqadir Hiyawî and Rîma Ehmed Îsamîl Hiyawî were killed in the attack on the village of Mişêrfe; 5 people, including children, were injured.

The names of the injured who were taken to the Dirbesiyê District People's Hospital and Heseke Hospital are as follows: Rehef Qetaf, Heca Hiyawî, Cûdî Hiyawî, Dinya Îsmâîl and Fayiz Hiyawî.



Iran strikes Eastern Kurdistan Forces in Iraq

ANF | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

Combat drones of the Iranian state have been shelling the regions of Bradost and Belekayeti in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) over the past five days.

Speaking to RojNews, Iranian Communist Party (Union) Kurdistan Organizations Politbureau member Hasan Rahman Pena stated that an Iranian UCAV has been striking the bases of Eastern Kurdistan Komele forces in the region of Zirgiwê near Sulaymaniyah since early this morning.

As the intensified bombardment continues, information about the damage it caused is not yet available, said Hasan Rahman.

Another official from the Communist Union, Seyid Emani, stated that Iranian attacks targeted the base of Komeleya Zehmetkêşan three times, and the base of Komeleya Şoreşgerî ya Zehmetkêşan four times.

Komeley Şorrişgêrrî Zehmetkêşanî Kurdistanî Êran, Komele in short, was founded in late 1960's. A splitting group established a new organization named Komeleya Zehmetkêşên Kurdistanê Êranê in 2007.

Drone strikes by Iran also targeted the base of the Democratic Kurdistan Party (Hizba Demokrat a Kurdistanê) in Koyê.

The regions of Bradost and Balekayeti have been under uninterrupted bombardment for five days now. Intensified attacks on Tuesday night mainly targeted the areas of Berbizinan, Nav Rubaran and Seqer in Bradost.

The locations attacked by Iran house local people from Bradost. Civilian settlements were directly affected by the aggression. The lives of the local people, who live on farming, are in jeopardy due to the increasingly ongoing bombardment. Several families are reported to have abandoned their homes.

The vicinity of the Mawat town near Sulaymaniyah was also targeted by heavy shelling on Wednesday.

20 artillery shells landed in the surroundings of the Jajle and Giwêzel villages.

While attacks continue, information on possible casualties was not immediately available.

Iranian attacks on Southern Kurdistan result in deaths and injuries

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

For five days, Iran has been attacking areas in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) with drones and missiles. The wave of attacks is directed against bases of the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (PDK-I), the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK) and Komala in the provinces of Hewlêr (Erbil) and Sulaymaniyah. According to initial information from the PDK-I, two of its members were killed in the district of Koyê near Hewlêr, and dozens more were injured. The massive bombardment caused panic among the population; people fleeing can be seen on social media videos.

Komala also reports casualties from the bombing of a base in Zirgwêz near Sulaymaniyah. Also attacked was a PAK base in Pirde, south of Hewlêr, and the town of Mawet in the foothills of the Asos Mountains, where PJAK operates base camps.

The Iranian state news agency IRNA confirmed that Iranian elite forces attacked the headquarters of the Iran-based Kurdish opposition parties in the provinces of Hewlêr and Sulaymaniyah. According to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) Ministry of Health, at least seven people have been killed and another 24 injured. Among the victims are civilians as well as members of the attacked opposition parties, including children.

Iran accuses the Kurdish opposition parties of being involved in the uprisings that broke out after the death of Jina Mahsa Amini. The 22-year-old Kurdish woman from was arrested in Tehran on 13 September for “inappropriate dress” by the morality police and died shortly afterwards in hospital as a result of massive ill-treatment.



AANES calls for a no-fly zone against Turkish attacks

ANF | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) defined the continued Turkish attacks on the region as crimes against humanity and called on the international community to act. The executive council of AANES in the Cizîrê region provided information about the latest deadly attacks by Turkey at a press conference in Amûdê on Wednesday. Accordingly, an AANES car was bombed by a drone at 1.50 p.m. local time on Tuesday. The co-chairs of the Justice Office, Zeyneb Mihemed and Yilmaz Şero, were martyred in the attack. In the evening, villages in Zirgan town (Abu Rasen) were attacked with heavy weapons, leaving two fourteen-year-olds dead and six people, including children, injured.

“These brutal attacks are a continuation of the genocidal war waged by the fascist Turkish state against the people of the region, which is directed against the security and stability as well as the institutions of the autonomous administration. Moreover, these attacks aim to displace the original inhabitants of the region and undermine the project of the autonomous administration,” Ahîn Siwêd said on behalf of AANES at the press conference.

The attack on the chairpersons of the Justice Office coincided with the operations against the “Islamic State” (ISIS) supported by the international coalition, the AANES representative continued. “With its attacks, Turkey is undermining the fight against terrorism and collaborating with ISIS. We condemn the terrorist attacks by the Turkish occupying state and consider them war crimes against humanity. We call on the international community, the coalition and Russia to take responsibility,” said Ahîn Siwêd, offering condolences to the relatives of the victims and the people of north-eastern Syria.



“This betrayal will not harm our relationship with the Armenian people”

ANF | 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

Guerrilla fighters Atilla Çiçek (Leheng) and Hüseyin Yıldırım (Alişer), who were arrested in Armenia in November 2021, have been handed over to the AKP/MHP regime by the Armenian intelligence service. The spokesperson of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) for foreign relations, Zagros Hiwa, spoke to ANF about the significance of these developments.

“They considered Armenia a friend”

Hiwa reported that the two guerrilla fighters had tried to cross the Karasu (Avareş) River in November 2021. In the process, they lost their way due to the bad weather conditions and came to the Armenian border: “There they were confronted by Armenian border guards. Since they considered Armenia a friend, they did not start a battle but entered into a dialogue. But they were arrested and put in a cell in Yerevan.”

Illegally abducted after release

Regarding the trial of the two, Hiwa stated: “The Armenian judiciary prosecuted them and provided them with a lawyer. As a result of the trial, they were sentenced to eight years in prison. Our two comrades then went on hunger strike. Thanks to the efforts of lawyers and some prominent figures, the case was brought to the Supreme Court and on 28 February the eight-year sentence was lifted. Both friends were released. After their release, they were abducted.”

“The Armenian government has been stalling”

Concerning the abduction, the KCK spokesperson said: “According to the information we have, Kinyas Hasanov, a Kurdish quota deputy in Pashinyan's party, has held talks with the Ministry of Justice and other state agencies and learned that both were in Armenia and enjoying good health. They swore on the honour of the state that they would be released. For this reason, we have not released any information about the situation of our two friends to the press.” Hiwa underlined that the KCK had no direct contact with the Armenian government, but that it was possible to negotiate through lawyers and Kurdish institutions.

“This is a betrayal of the Armenian people”

Regarding the consequences of the Armenian government's actions, Hiwa said: “Kurds and Armenians live on the same land and have been subjected to persecution and massacres by the Turkish state. They share a common fate. Therefore, we will not allow the Pashinyan government to destroy this common fate between the Kurdish and Armenian people. We consider the extradition of our comrades to the fascist Turkish regime by the Pashinyan government not only as a betrayal of the Kurdish people, but as the biggest betrayal of the Armenian people. We know that the true representatives of the Armenian people do not accept this betrayal. The Armenians have openly expressed their protest in the media. This betrayal will not harm our relations with the Armenian people. On the contrary, it is one of the reasons for strengthening our struggle against fascism.”



HPG: The action in Mersin is a response to massacres and chemical weapons

ANF | BEHDINAN | 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

The People's Defence Forces (HPG) issued a statement on the action that targeted a police building in Mersin province. The statement released by the HPG press centre on Thursday includes the following:

“On the night of 26 September, two female comrades carried out a self-sacrificing action against enemy forces in the Mezitli district of Mersin. The action took place in response to the repression in the prisons, the massacres and the use of chemical weapons against the guerrillas.

Our companions, Sara and Rûken, have put their faith in the perspective of a professional self-sacrificing guerrilla team. They started moving from the rural area and successfully achieved their goal by overcoming all enemy information networks. The AKP/MHP regime wants to give the impression that it controls the whole of Turkey, knows everything about society and has agents everywhere. This is to intimidate society. Nevertheless, the enemy did not have any information about the identity of our friends or the nature of the action until our statement. In order to cover up its own weakness, the fascist AKP/MHP government has presented a false scenario for society.

Our self-sacrificing guerrilla team, under the command of comrade Sara, succeeded in achieving their goal in a professional manner. The fact that our companions Sara and Rûken went after the enemy target with great courage, self-confidence, prudence and determination is testimony to a spirit of sacrifice. They had the initiative in their hands and fired at the enemy first with a pistol and then with automatic weapons. Our self-sacrificing team organised this action on the basis of going after the enemy without hesitation for a sure result and carrying out a self-sacrificing action. At the same time, the action was masterfully planned at a professional level so that civilians would not be harmed. And this plan was successfully implemented by Sara and Rûken. After the battle with the enemy forces, they lured the enemy to them and set off the prepared explosion. They carried out their action and fell. The action of our comrades Sara and Rûken is proof of what autonomous self-sacrificing guerrilla teams and the Apoist self-sacrificing militants are capable of at the desired place and level.

The Turkish state has attacked our forces with internationally banned bombs and chemical weapons a total of 2568 times in the years 2021 and 2022, starting at the beginning of 2021 in Siyanê in the Gare region. 66 of our comrades were killed in the attacks with banned bombs and chemical weapons. This crime against humanity, committed thousands of times by the Turkish state, has been ignored by everyone, nobody has reacted to it. Our companion Sara took part in the revolutionary operation against the enemy occupation attack in Gare in February 2021 at the command level. She was one of the first comrades who immediately started to move in the revolutionary operation, unreservedly attacked the enemy and reached the Siyanê camp where our companions were killed by chemical weapons. The chemical gas used there also affected Sara. The martyrdom of Şoreş Beytüşşebap and our other companions affected her deeply. She vowed revenge and based her self-sacrificing action on that.

The AKP/MHP government could not find out the names of our comrades who carried out this action. This shows how weak its intelligence service is. Although they knew that our friend Zozan Tolan was not involved in the action, the government deliberately named her and wanted to use her as a bargaining chip against her family and other circles. Our friend Zozan has nothing to do with this incident, she continues to do her job. The AKP/MHP government has arrested many people because of this action and is trying to take revenge on the people through pressure and torture. It is doing this to hide its failure against our self-sacrificing guerrilla team and to cover up the incident.

The AKP/MHP government has not been able to establish where our comrades came from for their action. It is deliberately trying to present it as if the action was from Rojava. Our friend Rûken had been in our ranks for a long time as a PKK militant in the rural area and as a member of Hêzên Taybet. She had no connection with the organisations in Rojava. The claim that this action was organised in Syria is not true. It is a fabricated lie of the AKP/MHP government, which is targeting its opponents.

While the sword of genocide is being pointed at our people, those resisting are being subjected to inhuman measures in the prisons, innocent Kurdish people are being murdered in different ways every day and our comrades are being martyred by chemical weapons, nobody can expect different behaviour from the Apoist self-sacrificing militants. Those who raise their voices against this great action should first look at the vile and dishonourable use of chemical weapons against our guerrillas by the fascist and genocidal AKP/MHP regime. If circles do not condemn the use of chemical weapons by the fascist regime and instead, for whatever reason, use the language of the enemy to criticise those who sacrifice themselves to protect the Kurdish people and their values, this can only be explained by the fact that they are intimidated.

The comrades who sacrifice themselves to stop the genocide of the Kurdish people are our highest values. Those who verbally attack these values do not represent our patriotic people or the truth of self-sacrifice.

As long as the fascist AKP/MHP regime does not stop the inhuman torture in the prisons, the measures aimed at annihilation against our people and the use of chemical weapons against the guerrillas, we will continue such actions.



Iran attacks on South Kurdistan leave 13 people, including a pregnant woman, dead and 58 injured

ANF | 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

While the popular uprising in Iran continued, East Kurdistan forces and civilians in South Kurdistan became the target of Tehran's attack.

The bases of the Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (PKD-I), the Iranian Kurdistan Revolutionary Workers' Community (Komele) and the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK) in the Sulaymaniyah and Hewlêr regions were heavily bombed.

According to the South Kurdistan anti-terrorist services, 13 people, including a pregnant woman, were killed in the attacks, and 58 people, mostly civilians, were injured. Three reporters from the K24 television channel are among the injured.

Ballistic missiles and tens of drones

The statement added that the region was bombed more than 70 times with ballistic missiles and bomb-laden drones.

According to the Baghdad government, the attack was carried out with 20 bomb-laden drones.

While the Baghdad and Hewler administrations condemned the attacks, Centcom, the US military command in the Middle East, announced that they shot down a drone that was heading towards Hewler on Wednesday afternoon and “seemed to be a threat to Centcom forces”.

Washington denounced the “unacceptable attacks” on Iraqi sovereignty, while London urged Tehran to “stop their indiscriminate bombardment”.

Berlin too described this tension as “unacceptable”. Paris, on the other hand, condemned Tehran's “blatant violation of Iraqi sovereignty”.



Human Rights Violations

ISIS members continue to shelter in Turkey, some with Yazidi captives

ANF | TURKEY | 24 AUGUST 2022

In the aftermath of the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, Turkey changed its “counterterrorism” strategy to focus operations “at the source in situ” of perceived threats. The strategy has been applied particularly against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), as portrayed by frequent reports of high-ranking PKK members being killed in Syrian and Iraqi territory with the aid of Turkey’s intelligence networks as well as both armed and unarmed drones.

Yet, the same strategy does not seem to be applied to ISIS. The most recent operation of note by the authorities against ISIS was the capture and return of Kasım Güler from Syria on June 21, 2021. Güler had been appointed as the ISIS “governor” of Turkey. In his testimony, Güler said that after ISIS lost its territory in Syria, the group decided to reestablish itself in Turkey under the instructions of self-proclaimed Caliph and former ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi before he was killed.

Faced with the continued presence of ISIS cells within its borders, Turkey has been slow to respond to potential threats posed by the group, as well as inconsistencies in the judicial system’s handling of ISIS suspects and the plight of Yazidis still held captive by some ISIS members in Turkey. I have reported extensively on these topics and will highlight some trends below that are strikingly absent from the national discourse.

Yazidis held by ISIS in Turkey

Following the 2014 Shengal massacre in Iraq, Yazidi women and children continue to be held captive and sexually abused by ISIS members living in Turkey — and elsewhere — though their number remains unknown. ISIS members use the dark web to sell and purchase Yazidi women and children they kidnapped from Sinjar.

Several Yazidi families have somehow managed to reach out to children in ISIS captivity and secured their release without the involvement of police and other relevant authorities. Some Yazidi families pursue such resolutions out of fear that by cooperating with the authorities in Turkey, ISIS members may become aware of their actions and, in response, they may harm or kill the relative they seek to rescue.

So-called “secure intermediaries” emerge when an ISIS member attempts to sell a Yazidi on the dark web or communicates with the Yazidi families seeking to “buy” their relative’s freedom. The intermediaries’ profile often involves criminal activity, such as drug trafficking, extortion, battery, and ISIS membership starting from 2011-2012, though they usually did not fully adapt to rule under the extremist group. These

criminals would then return to Turkey through illegal routes with “war plunder” (such as a Yazidi woman or girl).

Exchanges normally begin with the secure intermediary taking a captive woman or child from the home of an ISIS member. After changing vehicles a few times to avoid detection, the woman or child is brought to a previously designated location. The woman or child is then handed over to their families. Payments to ISIS members are made by the victims’ families, mostly in cryptocurrencies. Sometimes the Iraqi Embassy in Ankara steps in and prepares travel documents for the rescued Yazidis to return to Iraq.

Rescue operations I’ve covered

In 2018, an Iraqi Turkmen, who was also a high-ranking ISIS member (with the rank of emir) from Tel Afar, rented a flat in Ankara’s Keçiören district. The apartment building was located on a street behind the local police station. The emir moved in with his wife, their four children and an enslaved Yazidi woman, who was 14 years old at the time of her capture by ISIS in 2014.

She became pregnant after being raped by the emir and gave birth. During this time, the emir frequently traveled back and forth from Iraq. The person who located the Yazidi woman was her brother, who, after years of effort, was able to track his sister’s journey from Mosul to Ankara. He discreetly photographed his sister with her 8-month-old baby on one of the rare occasions they left the flat.

He then went to the police with the information he had gathered. This led to the police detention of the ISIS emir and his wife, though they were released on the grounds of “lack of complaint.” However, the existing evidence of kidnapping, torture and rape was sufficient to initiate a public trial.

In another case in Ankara’s Sincan district, a 24-year-old enslaved Yazidi woman was rescued after her relatives in Australia (who themselves are asylum-seekers) purchased her on the dark web. The woman was held captive in a house in Sincan for 10 months and systematically raped. Signs of torture in the form of cigarette burns and razor cuts were found on her body.

According to what I learned from the Yazidi community, this was actually the second time she had been sold. In 2018, her photo was posted online on a virtual slave market and she was sold within about an hour. The buyer was an Iraqi Turkmen ISIS member located in Mosul at the time.

This person, who frequently traveled to Turkey, brought the enslaved Yazidi woman along with his two wives and four children to live in a flat in Sincan. In 2020, a payment for her release was made in Iraq and the woman was handed over to secure intermediaries in Ankara.

A separate rescue effort took three years to complete. Hadiya Hussein Zandinan was pregnant when she was captured during the ISIS invasion of Sinjar in 2014. Two years later, Hadiya and her daughter were put up for sale on the dark web and her relatives paid about 17,000 USD to secure their release.

Once free, Hadiya set out to learn the fates of her abducted son, husband, mother, father and three siblings. In 2017, two of her siblings were tracked down in Kırşehir. When an Iraqi Turkmen woman went to register two children, aged 9 and 11, the official suspected she was not their mother and launched procedures that led to the involvement of Iraqi Embassy officials.

The children were subsequently identified as Yazidi and placed under state protection. In addition, the Iraqi Embassy registered the children and their photos with organizations that help families find missing Yazidis. Hadiya recognized the two children as her brothers and, despite traveling to Kırşehir, was unable to be reunited with them due to legal barriers.

A DNA test –required for Hadiya to obtain legal guardianship– showed a match, but authorities required Hadiya to produce evidence that the parents of the siblings were deceased. The procedures initiated a legal battle that spanned three years, and the story was translated into various languages, gaining international attention.

Finally, with political intervention, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan handed the children over to Nechirvan Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, in Ankara on Sept. 4, 2020.

In yet another case, a seven-year-old girl was put up for sale on the dark web in February 2021. The online advertisement was removed after about five minutes. Police tracking various illegal activities on the dark web posed as the child's family and offered a high payment. Meanwhile, the cybercrime unit identified the location of the IP address. The child was rescued from an address in Ankara's Keçiören district and ISIS suspects were taken into custody.

Jihadist returnees from Syria

In addition to their captives, is the presence of ISIS militants themselves. A decade ago, people from around the world who sought to join a jihadist struggle and did so by joining ISIS, often used routes through Turkey and into Syria. Following the group's geographical defeat in 2017, the same routes were used in reverse.

Returning jihadists and ISIS sympathizers from Turkey were among the main supporters of Syrian and Iraqi militants. This support, along with other aid, facilitated the sheltering and housing of many Iraqi and Syrian militants in Turkey.

Currently, ISIS members that have returned are residing in the Turkey provinces of Antakya, Batman, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Kayseri, Kırşehir, Konya, Yalova and Yozgat, with the largest groups in Ankara and İstanbul, according to data found in indictments and based on publicly available information regarding the location of where counterterrorism operations targeting ISIS are carried out.

Ankara's Çubuk, Sincan and Pursaklar districts, along with the neighborhood of Saray have become popular areas to reside among foreign ISIS members. These districts and neighborhoods also host outlawed schools that provide education in line with jihadist values.

Furthermore, Kırşehir is the city of choice for the close relatives and staff members of slain former ISIS leader al-Baghdadi. Although security forces often carry out counterterrorism operations in Kırşehir, a sizable ISIS presence remains in the city.

In İstanbul, ISIS members have also found shelter in conservative districts. According to Interior Ministry statements, almost all ISIS members detained during counterterrorism operations in İstanbul have been Iraqi or Syrian citizens.

Wives and children

It is common knowledge that the wives and children of Free Syrian Army (FSA) members live in İstanbul's Başakşehir district and it is no secret that FSA fighters have settled in İstanbul, as well as other cities, and received citizenship of Turkey. Many of the Syrian and Iraqi FSA fighters based in Turkey make their living by engaging in human smuggling.

These smugglers provide one of few remaining options for families wanting to bring their daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren into Turkey informally, without registering them in the legal system. Grandparents and families desperate to retrieve their relatives from the al-Hol and al-Roj detention camps run by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), pay FSA members between 40,000-50,000 euros to smuggle them out, according to my reporting.

Many grandparents living in Ankara and İstanbul have brought their daughters and grandchildren to Turkey through these smuggling networks. Through my reporting, I maintain contact with such families and have met relatives who entered Turkey through such means. When I visit these families, I observe returnee children don't want to remove the white, entari-style robe that they have grown up wearing under ISIS-rule.

I've also witnessed such children playing with large kitchen knives and acting out mock hangings, with one putting a cord around another's neck. In face-to-face interviews with their mothers, I ask whether they receive psychological support for their children, who were subjected to ISIS military and religious education.

Neither the mothers nor the children receive any psychological treatment or support and continue to live highly private lives cut off from the wider society.

Counterterrorism ops tend to target foreigners

Despite rolling counterterrorism operations carried out against ISIS on a monthly basis and media reports of alleged members being detained, there is little information with regards to how many militants caught in such operations are then prosecuted. In the event where an alleged ISIS member is prosecuted and convicted, quite often their legal defense team will make use of the effective remorse clause in the Turkish Penal Code, which lowers the duration of their prison sentence.

Some defendants are able to return to their regular lives with only judicial controls being applied. Many ISIS members that have utilized the effective remorse clause go on to live relatively quiet lives in their neighborhoods, operating or working in small businesses. Such counterterrorism raids and legal procedures do not prevent ISIS members from sheltering, transferring money and smuggling people.

When examining the nationality of those detained in counterterrorism operations, the vast majority turn out to be foreign nationals, predominantly Iraqi, Syrian, Turkmen and Kazakh. In contrast, ISIS members with citizenship of Turkey generally remain undisturbed and live under the radar unless police are tipped-off or there's a report in the press.

‘High-ranking’ ISIS members in Ankara

Looking deeper into inconsistencies with legal procedures, a secrecy order was placed on the indictment against the ISIS members who brought the seven-year-old Yazidi child described above to Turkey and put her up for sale.

I managed to obtain a copy of the indictment and found all three suspects –believed to be ISIS members– had been released. The indictment stated that Iraqi citizens Anas V., Sabah A. H. O. and Nasser H.R. worked under Jabbar Salmman Ali Farhan Al Issawi, who was known as a figure close to slain former ISIS leader al-Baghdadi.

The indictment referred to the three released men as “senior [terrorist] organizational leaders” and included information that Anas and Nazir were in charge of a ‘Prisoners’ Court’ in Fallujah. All three alleged ISIS members are currently residing in Ankara and are on probation.

Seeking out an interview, I recently went to the house of Sabah A.H.O., who lives in the Şentepe neighborhood of Ankara. He refused. He works as a shopkeeper in the neighborhood.

Between June 2021 and August 2022, at least four more Yazidi women (two of whom have been made public) were put up for sale by ISIS members in Turkey, according to my reporting. All were bought and returned to their families in Ankara and subsequently left the country.

Judging by police bulletins and the statements of Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, Turkey does not let ISIS move a muscle as dozens of alleged members are detained each month. For some reason, however, these raids do not prevent ISIS members from sheltering, transferring money and selling people within Turkey.

This report was published on Bianet and produced by Turkey recap with support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Turkey and the IPS Communication Foundation.



Turkey’s left-wing alliance reveals joint roadmap

MEDYANEWS | 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

A left-wing election alliance led by the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) announced a joint political declaration in İstanbul on Saturday.

The Labour and Freedom Alliance was formed last month to wage a common democratic struggle in the presidential and parliamentary elections in Turkey, currently scheduled for 2023.

Representatives of the HDP, the Labourers Movement Party (EHP), Labour Party (EMEP), the Federation of Socialist Assemblies (SMF), the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) and the Social Freedom Party (TÖP) met with their supporters in İstanbul to share their political priorities as elections approach.

A joint declaration shared with the public said the elections had critical importance for Turkey, adding that though the struggle for democracy should not lead people to tie all their hopes to the elections, at the same time they should not ignore the importance of the ballot box.

The alliance between the six parties is in fact an alliance of workers, poor people, women, youth, and advocates for nature and human rights, it said.

A new economic system ensuring dignified working and living conditions, a democracy based on popular sovereignty, a peaceful and democratic solution for the country's Kurdish issue, justice, equality and freedom for women, as well as for the youth, the disabled and other disadvantaged groups, and the protection of nature, the environment and cultural heritage were listed as main priority areas in the declaration.

"The people of Turkey are not condemned to the dominant political environment squeezed between the People's Alliance and the Nation Alliance," the declaration said, referring to rival alliances which both have intrinsically similar policies in many ways; one formed by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and the other that brought together six parties led by the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP).

The left-wing alliance called people to join the common struggle for building a new Turkey where democracy and freedoms prevail.



People in Maxmur condemn Iraqi government for insisting on surrounding camp with barbed wire

ANF | MAXMUR | 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

On 27 December 2021, Iraqi state forces attempted to close the Martyr Rustem Cûdî Refugee Camp (Maxmur) with barbed wire fences. The people of the camp flocked to the point where the Iraqi forces were located and prevented them from laying the wire.

After the resistance of the people of Maxmur, the Baghdad administration gave up the plan for a while, only to bring this issue on its agenda once again. Speaking to ANF about the attempt to re-encircle the camp with barbed wire fences, the Maxmur refugees stated that they would never, in any way, accept this decision of the Iraqi state.

Part of the policy against the camp

Commenting on the behind-the-scenes decision regarding the wire fences, Martyrs' Families Committee Spokesperson Sultan Yıldızhan said: “The Turkish state is attacking us with the cooperation of Iraq and the KDP. The decision to surround the camp with wire fences is part of this policy.”

Yıldızhan pointed out that there are currently 11 thousand refugees living in the camp and they are recognized as political refugees by both the Iraqi government and the United Nations.

Emphasizing that the camp residents have so far not harmed the Iraqi state and the South Kurdistan Federal Administration, Yıldızhan continued: “We have not harmed anyone. Why are they putting these pressures on us? We will definitely not accept the decision to fence the camp and we will resist to the end, whatever the cost. Just as we respect the sovereignty of Iraq, we want them to respect the will of the Maxmur Refugee Camp.”

Camp like an open prison

A resident of the Maxmur Refugee Camp, Kerima Kanat, said that they object to the fencing of the camp. Stating that they would not allow the siege of the camp in any way, Kanat continued: “If they put up fences around the camp, this place will be like an open prison. We do not want to live in prison and, therefore, we will do whatever is necessary and prevent the implementation of this decision. After all the pain we have suffered and the martyrs we have given, they are also imposing a prison life on us. If we had accepted this persecution and prisons, we would not have left our lands.”



SDF receives more than 100 civilians forcibly deported from Turkey

ANF | 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

The SDF has received more than 100 civilians, including elders, women, and children, in areas close to the front lines in the village of Al-TirwazIya, in the eastern countryside of Raqqa. The 100 civilians had been forcibly deported from the refugee camps located in the Turkish Occupying State.

Upon their arrival in their areas, the SDF provided them with relief assistance and first aid. They were exhausted and stranded. Moreover, some of them were urgently hospitalized since they were tortured by the Turkish police.

One of the forcibly deported men said, “While I was on my way to work, suddenly the Turkish police arrested me without any accusation. I was subjected to severe torture at the police station, and then they transferred me to a prison-like camp in the desert surrounded by a fence with tight security.”

He added, “They promised the Syrians to grant them citizenship cards, but they were lying. Turkey treated us badly, and no one defended us. The Turkish police force Syrian refugees to sign a deportation document by which the deportee becomes banned from entering Turkish territory for five years.”

Another deportee said, “The Turkish army tortured us brutally when we were arrested at the border, some of us fainted due to brutal torture.”

These criminal practices by the Turkish Occupying State attest to its inhuman nature.



Thousands detained in 146 cities of Iran as protests continue

ANF | 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

Mizan Online reported that Gulamhüseyin Muhseni Eceyi, head of the judiciary, asked security forces to show no tolerance against those who incite the “riots” following President Ibrahim Raisi's instruction to be “tough against anyone who harms the security, peace and people of the country.”

The massive protest erupted when a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, was tortured to death on September 16 after her detention by the morality police in Tehran on September 13.

The protests that started in East Kurdistan have spread rapidly. According to opposition sources, protests have taken place in at least 10 locations in Tehran on the night of September 25. Protestors chanted slogans against the government and religious leader Khamenei. Videos were shared on social media networks of protests also in Tabriz in the northwest of the country. Images also show Iranian security forces opening fire at protesters.

Protesters tore down a portrait of Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic, in front of the Babol Noshirvani University of Technology in the northern province of Mazandaran.

Images published on the social media show that protests continue in many cities of East Kurdistan and Baluchistan. A video shows people chanting slogans in solidarity with the Kurds in Balochistan.

8 thousand detentions in 146 cities, 180 deaths reported

The recent protests, deemed as the most significant popular backlash since the protests against the increase in fuel prices in 2019, have spread to dozens of other cities.

Oppositional sources claim that the protests have spread to at least 146 cities in 31 provinces.

Sources close to the Iranian opposition group People's Mujahedin report that at least 8,000 people were detained in 146 cities and the death toll has surged to more than 180. The same source also released a list of names of those killed during the demonstrations.

According to the official figures, 41 people have died in 10 days. However, the government did not unveil how many of them were demonstrators.

The Oslo-based Iranian Human Rights Organization reported that at least 57 activists lost their lives.

Iranian officials reported earlier that more than 700 people had been detained in a single province.

The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) disclosed that 17 journalists have been taken into custody during the course of the crackdown.



Mehmet Şirin Tunç faces up to 15 years in prison

ANF | AMED | 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

With the criminal proceedings against Mehmet Şirin Tunç, the struggle for peace and democracy in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan is once again being put on trial. The peace activist is being tried for “membership of a terrorist organisation” with a sentence set at seven and a half to 15 years in prison.

Mehmet Şirin Tunç is charged with his activities as deputy co-chair of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP) and his involvement in the legal grassroots alliance Democratic Society Congress (DTK). On the first day of the trial at the 8th Jury Court in Diyarbakır (ku. Amed), the sentence was set at up to 15 years.

The prosecution accuses Tunç of having entered the DTK building 34 times and of having participated in the founding meeting of the association. He is alleged to have carried out “propaganda for a terrorist organisation” at a DTK event in 2017. He also attended rallies, press conferences and funerals “on the orders of the PKK”, says the Kafkaesque indictment, according to which Tunç also held educational events at the DBP's academy. The indictment accuses him of being a leading member of the DTK and wanting to create Kurdish national unity and destroy Turkey's territorial integrity. In this sense, he is alleged to have tried to influence the population. Due to the “seriousness” of the charges, a sentence ranging from seven and a half to 15 years' imprisonment was demanded. At the moment, Tunç remains in restricted freedom under reporting conditions.

Mehmet Şirin Tunç — a life for peace, freedom and justice

Mehmet Şirin Tunç's struggle for peace and democracy has a long history. After decades in political captivity, he joined the guerrillas at the end of the 1980s and spent ten years in the Kurdish mountains. In 1999, at the call of Abdullah Öcalan, he returned to Northern Kurdistan in a peace group, “as a sign of goodwill”. Although this delegation entered officially at the time as a gesture of peace and confronted the military in Şemdinli district of Hakkari, they were arrested and imprisoned after a brief reception. Tunç remained in prison for three years. He then became involved in the Human Rights Association (IHD) and became the deputy chairman of the HDP member party DBP.



CPJ says at least 18 journalists arrested in Iran, calls for their immediate release

ANF | 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called on Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all journalists arrested while covering mass protests around the country and restore blocked internet access.

CPJ has learned from multiple sources inside Iran that as of Sunday, September 25, at least 18 journalists had been arrested as clashes between security forces and protesters left dozens dead. Details of arrests are sparse amid an internet blackout and major disruptions to phone and social media networks, but CPJ's sources said that several of the journalists were taken into custody during post-midnight raids on their homes. The sources said that the security forces – who confiscated the journalists' electronic devices – did not identify which agency they represented or produce arrest warrants or explanation of charges.

The protests began last week over the death in morality-police custody of a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, arrested for allegedly violating the country's conservative dress law.

“Iranian authorities must immediately release all journalists arrested because of their coverage of Mahsa Amini's death and the protests that have followed,” said CPJ's Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator, Sherif Mansour. “Iranian security forces must drop their repressive measures against the journalists telling this critical story and restore the internet access that is vital to keep the public informed.”

Those arrested include photojournalist Yalda Moaiery on September 19, Shargh Daily reporter Niloofar Hamedi on September 21, and Iranian photojournalist Ahmadreza Halabisaz on September 22.

Moaiery, writing on Instagram Stories from a van taking her to jail, said she was beaten and arrested while covering protests on Hejab street in downtown Tehran.

Hamedi, a reporter for the Tehran-based semi-reformist Shargh Daily, was among the first journalists to report on Amini's hospitalization, according to a report by the exile-run news website IranWire. Her lawyer, Mohammad-Ali Kamfirouzi, tweeted Sunday that Hamedi was able to make a phone call to her husband and say that she is in solitary confinement and being interrogated in Tehran's Evin prison. She had not been told of any charges against her.

Halabisaz was arrested in downtown Tehran on Valiasr Street while he was photographing the protests. A few hours after his arrest, he was permitted to call his family and tell them that he was taken to Evin prison, BBC Persian service reported. His Instagram page has since been deactivated.

The following list of journalists arrested as of September 25 is based on CPJ's sources, media reports, and the Tehran Journalists Association;

Yalda Moaiery, photojournalist; **Niloofar Hamedi**, reporter; **Iman Behpasand**, political commentator, columnist, and women's issues reporter; **Behzad Vafakhah**, cultural and political columnist; **Ruhollah Nakhaee**, foreign policy reporter; **Alireza Khoshbakht**, political reporter; **Zahra Tohidi**, political reporter; **Fatemeh Rajabi**, economics reporter, arrested in her home in Tehran; **Mojtaba Rahimi**, a political reporter arrested in his home in the city of Qazvin following tweets about several protesters killed in and around his hometown; **Majid Tavakoli**, political commentator and columnist, arrested in his Tehran home; **Marzieh Talaei**, a Kurdish reporter arrested in the city of Saqqez in Kurdistan province; **Masoud Kordpour**, editor-in-chief of the Kurdish Mukrian News Agency; **Khosrow Kordpour**, editor and reporter with the Kurdish News website Mukrian New Agency, brother of Masoud Kordpour; **Elahe Mohammadi**, a reporter with the state-run Hammihan Daily. According to a tweet by her lawyer, Mohammad-Ali Kamfirouzi, she was arrested on September 22. According to the lawyer, security forces broke the entrance door to her house and arrested her violently and confiscated her personal devices, such as laptop, books, phone and even her press card; **Elnaz Mohammadi**, political reporter with semi-state- state-run bi-monthly Andishepouya magazine; twin sister of Elahe Mohammadi; **Vida Rabbani**, political commentator recently sentenced to ten years and four months in prison and banned from practicing journalism; **Hamed Shafiei**, political and social reporter; **Ahmadreza Halabisaz**, photojournalist



Kurdish football fans arrested by anti-terrorist police for 'provocation'

MEDYANEWS | AMED | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

At least five fans of Amedspor Football Club have been arrested and taken to the city's Anti-Terrorist Branch police station after Turkey's Interior Ministry launched an investigation into fans of the club, from Diyarbakır (Amed), the unofficial capital of the country's mainly Kurdish southeast, following a show of support for Iranian anti-government protesters at a match last weekend.

Images from the match show opposing fans throwing objects at one another after the match finished, and some news sources said that Bursa players had been targeted while warming down on the pitch.

Yet the ministry's statement, quoted by Turkish news outlet Halk TV, referred to "provocative images" worn at the match by fans "in spite of security measures."

Many Amedspor fans arrived at their team's 2–0 home victory against Bursaspor on Sunday carrying Kurdistan flags and wearing T-shirts bearing images of Mahsa (Jina) Amini, the Iranian Kurdish woman whose death sparked anti-government protests in Iran.

Amini died on 16 September, after being hospitalised during a reported beating by Iran's morality police. The 22-year-old had been arrested for wearing her hijab improperly, and her death has led to both massive protests in Iran's mainly Kurdish provinces and nationwide demonstrations against the Islamic Republic's strict impositions on women's rights.

Demonstrations in solidarity with Amini and the Iranian protesters have taken place around the world, in countries ranging from Britain to Malaysia. But the T-shirts worn by Amedspor fans, the Turkish Interior Ministry said, was a "provocation".

"Those who want to poison sport with provocative materials will be afforded no opportunities," the ministry said in a statement. "The necessary intervention has been made on the provocation, and an immediate investigation into those concerned has begun."

Cultural expressions by Kurds, the country's largest ethnic minority, have been treated as a threat by the modern Turkish state since its beginnings in the early 20th century. Restrictions on the Kurdish language and political imagery including the Kurdish flag have been a running theme under the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2015.

After the match, the pro-government newspaper Yeni Şafak tweeted a video of Amedspor fans peacefully chanting in time to cheerful music, and waving their Kurdish flags. "Before the match, some Amedspor fans posed for the cameras carrying 'rags'," the newspaper's tweet said.



Jailed Kurdish teacher among detainees launching hunger strike in Iran

MEDYANEWS | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

A jailed Kurdish language teacher and a number of other activists have launched a hunger strike to demand freedom for Kurdish prisoners in Iran and protest torture and mistreatment in the prison, Iran Wire reported.

Zahra Mohammadi, a teacher and founding member of the Nozhin Cultural and Social Association, began the hunger strike with other Kurdish detainees at Sanandaj Prison as nationwide protests continue to rock the country after the killing of Kurdish 22-year-old Mahsa (Jîna) Amini.

Last December, Mohammadi, 29, was handed a five-year prison sentence for her political activism, which includes teaching the Kurdish language to children.

Mohammadi is the director of the Nozhin (Nûjîn) Socio-Cultural Association, an NGO which was established in 2011 and certified by the Iranian Ministry of Interior in 2013.

Jîna Mosares-Gorji, another well-known women's right activist in Kurdistan province, is also among the other prisoners involved in the hunger strike at the prison to protest the mistreatment of recently detained women by the Sanandaj Prison authorities, Hengaw reported.

Security officials had reportedly threatened in advance to arrest Mosares-Gorji if she took part in the protests against the morality police's killing of Mahsa Amini. Mosares-Gorji was detained on 21 September.

Amini's killing after her arrest for allegedly wearing her hijab improperly has sparked a wave of protests, both in Iran's mostly Kurdish western provinces and across other parts of the country.

The protests reached their 10th day on Monday, despite harsh police interventions claiming at least 41 lives.

As the protests spread across 31 cities, 739 protesters including 60 women were arrested in Gilan city alone on 25 September.



Kurdish parties back protester demanding OPCW probe of Turkish chemical weapons

MEDYANEWS | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

The solo demonstration of Kurdish man Xwaşnav Ata outside the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague has reached its second month, ANF reported.

To mark the occasion, Kurdish political parties and institutions paid a visit to Ata and supported his demonstration criticising the use of chemical weapons by Turkish forces.

For the last two years, multiple reports from areas of northern Iraq including Zap, Metina and Avaşîn have accused Turkey of using chemical weapons against Kurdish fighters, including use in populated areas.

Despite one report recording hundreds of villagers experiencing symptoms consistent with chemical weapons, the OPCW is yet to investigate the allegations.

And, though reports of chemical weapons use in northern Iraq reached a visiting delegation from the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear Warfare, the doctors were prevented from visiting the sites in question, ANF reported.

As reports of the prohibited attacks continue to come in, Ata has vowed to hold the vigil every day until the global watchdog holds a proper investigation.

Zübeyir Aydar, an executive council member of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (YNK) representative Şêx Şemal, and Brussels Kurdish Institute chair Derwêş Ferho were among the visitors.

Saying he takes courage from such visits, Ata said the OPCW had neither spoken to him about the issue nor listened to the demands for an investigation.

“We are hopeful, we take courage from our people and I am holding a vigil now, in the rain,” said Ata.

“The OPCW claims to be an independent institution, but they are careless about this vigil against the use of chemical weapons and they do not investigate the use of banned weapons,” he said.

During the visit, KCK executive council member Aydar said Turkey had used chemical weapons against Kurds in Iraq, especially in parts of the Zap, Avaşîn and Metîna areas.

“We all want, and everybody wants the world to pay attention to the use of banned weapons against our people,” said Aydar.

“They are now being used against us, and if the world stays silent these weapons will be used against other people.”

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, doctors from the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear Warfare said they had been prevented from visiting the villages of Hirur and Kani Masi in Amadiya region.

Doctors Jan van Aken and Joseph Savari said they had attempted to visit the villages to examine the site of a suspected chemical weapons attack and to talk to one of the alleged victims, but had been prevented by local authorities.

On 11 October 2021, 548 people living in an area close to the site of alleged Turkish attacks were hospitalised due to complaints of “excessive tearing of the eyes, blurred vision, sudden headaches, nosebleeds, difficulty in breathing and rash,” according to Mezopotamya News Agency.

The OPCW started procedures for an investigation into earlier allegations to determine whether Turkey had used white phosphorus against Syrian Kurdish forces, then abandoned the investigation in November 2019, the British newspaper The Times reported at the time.

Turkey admits to using tear gas. Kurdish groups in Iraq have reported more than 1,300 chemical weapons attacks since Turkish forces launched Operation Claw-Lock in April, and 14 casualties due to chemical exposure since the year began.

Protests continue in East Kurdistan and Iran

ANF | 27 SEPTEMBER 2022

Mass demonstrations to protest the murder of Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in East Kurdistan and Iran continued for the 10th consecutive day despite the brutal crackdown by the Iranian regime. 76 protestors have been killed by the security forces during the demonstrations so far.

Images circulated through social media networks show demonstrations held in Sine, Mahabat, Sardeşt, Meriwan, Diwander, Qurwe, Kirmaşan, Urmiyê and other provinces of East Kurdistan on Monday.

Helicopters and planes were reported to have been flying over Bane, Seqiz and Sine skies for the last few days. House raids and detentions of activists continue in the meantime.

Protests were staged last night in Tehran, Yezda, Mashhad, Tabriz, Burazcan, Bucnurd, Shiraz and other cities in Iran.

Moreover, the Iranian regime forces hired some foreign forces to suppress the demonstrations. Eyewitnesses revealed that there were Arabs among the armed forces mobilized to disperse the demonstrators in the city of Mashhad.

It is reported that the Iranian regime forces used Basij children, a paramilitary volunteer militia, to suppress the protests in some cities.

The Iran Human Rights Organization reported that 76 people, including 6 women and 4 children, were killed in the demonstrations that have been continuing for 10 days.

According to the Iranian government, 41 people have died so far.



Municipal workers arrested in Mersin crackdown following police death

MEDYANews | MERSIN | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

Police in the southern Turkish province of Mersin have taken into custody eight municipal workers in home raids at dawn on Wednesday, based on an arrest warrant for 30 people in total.

Mersin municipality's Press and Public Relations Director Bedrettin Gündeş and seven other workers have been arrested. Among the 22 remaining people on the list, 10 more work for the municipality.

A prosecutor issued the warrant over alleged terrorist propaganda, and the arrests are separate from another round of arrests in the same night when 22 people were taken into custody in relation to Monday's bomb explosion in the city.

Two women were caught on security camera opening fire on police lodgings in the city, and then detonating the bombs they had attached to their persons. Both women were killed in the explosions and the clashes that followed, according to Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu.

The minister also announced the identity of one of the alleged attackers, whose family home was raided the following day. The alleged attackers' father, two brothers and one sister were arrested.

Soylu blamed the attack, which killed one police officer, on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), but the armed group has not yet claimed responsibility for the attack.



Turkey: Fury as judges obstruct prime minister's testimony in Tahir Elçi murder case

MEDYANEWS | AMED | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

Lawyers in the murder trial of slain human rights lawyer Tahir Elçi have demanded that judges step down after they reversed a decision to call the Turkish former prime minister as a key witness.

Lawyers from the Diyarbakır Bar Association who intervened on the case called the reversal of the court board's decision to hear ex-prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's testimony "a disgraceful scandal" in a press statement.

The recent decision marks a new turning point in a six-year search for justice for a political assassination that has links to powerful actors in the Turkish state.

Elçi, a well-known human rights campaigner, was shot to death on 28 November 2015 while holding a press conference in central Diyarbakır (Amed) to criticise curfews imposed on predominantly Kurdish areas.

As Elçi called for an end to the violence that had flared up in the country that year, a shootout started between police and Kurdish militants, and Elçi was shot in the back of the head. International observers have noted the lack of an independent investigation, and the refusal to investigate police officers as suspects.

The campaigner's killing came as conflict between Turkey and Kurdish militants flared after the collapse of a two-year peace process with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 2015.

The resumption of the conflict came shortly after the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) stunned the country by winning 80 parliamentary seats in the elections in June 2015, resulting in the first hung parliament since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) gained power in 2002.

Turkish security forces conducted large-scale police and military operations accompanied by curfews in the mainly Kurdish southeast, killing dozens of locals, and Kurdish militants responded with an armed resistance. Large parts of the country had descended into armed conflict by the time snap elections were held in November 2015, and the AKP won a resounding victory.

The sequence of events led to accusations from some quarters that the AKP had encouraged the conflict to gain an advantage in the November vote.

Speculation mounted after the prime minister of the time, Ahmet Davutoğlu, split from the party in 2019 and later implied there had been foul play during the June–November 2019 period.

And, in September 2021, Davutoğlu publicly described Elçi's murder as a political assassination. The lawyers in the murder case requested that Davutoğlu be heard in court as a witness.

In the hearing on 15 June, the court accepted this request. However, in an interim hearing on 19 September, the court reversed this decision without the knowledge of the intervening lawyers who had made the request.

Nahit Eren, the chair of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, drew attention to irregularities in the investigation of Elçi's murder, noting that the crime scene investigation had been carried out three-and-a-half months after the assassination, and the trial started more than four years later.

By contrast, it took just nine days for the Turkish judiciary to prosecute Tahir Elçi for his statements on a live broadcast, which lawyers say made him a political target shortly before he was killed.

A lawsuit was filed against Elçi on terrorism charges after he stated on a live broadcast on October 2015 that the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) should not be considered a terrorist organisation but an armed political movement with significant social support.

The next hearing of the murder trial will be held on 23 November.

Police take 22 into custody in Mersin after attack on police station

ANF | MERSIN | 28 SEPTEMBER 2022

Many houses were raided as part of the investigation launched by the Mersin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office after the 26 September bombing and armed action against the Tece Police House in the neighbourhood of Deniz in Mersin's Mezitli district.

During the raids, 22 people were taken into custody and taken to Mersin Provincial Security Directorate.

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Opinion

The Flower of Transformation Blooms in Kurdistan

MEER | ASHISH KOTHARI | 15 SEPTEMBER 2022

Imagine this scenario. Drones are dropping bombs on you, NATO's 2nd biggest army is bearing down on you, a few hundred years of ethnic persecution have tried to wipe out your identity, a militant and religiously fascist organization is killing your men and abducting your women and children to become slaves. Yet in the midst of all this, you are organizing educational camps on women's freedom, ecological living and democracy, and trying to mobilise your communities to practice these ideals. Sounds like a fantasy movie? Indeed — except it is very real, very grounded, and happening right now.

Welcome to one of the least reported and understood war zones in the world, as also one of the least known and appreciated initiatives for just, sustainable, equitable living. This is Kurdistan, a large area inhabited by the Kurdish ethnic community along with many others (Armenians, Yezidis, Arabs, Christians), in the intersection of what is today known as Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. Since the 1970s, the Kurds have resisted persecution and massacre by the nation-state regimes they live in, and organized hundreds of their settlements to practice their own version of freedom and democracy.

In March 2022, I wrote about the Flower of Transformation, encompassing the following five petals, part of a framework on radical alternatives emerging from grounded initiatives in India and elsewhere (see Figure below):

1. **Ecological integrity and resilience**, including the conservation of nature and natural diversity, maintenance of ecological functions, respect for ecological limits (local to global), and ecological ethics in all human actions.
2. **Social well-being and justice**, including fulfilling lives (physically, socially, culturally, and spiritually), equity between communities and individuals, communal and ethnic harmony; and erasure of hierarchies and divisions based on faith, gender, caste, class, ethnicity, ability, and other such attributes.
3. **Direct and delegated democracy**, with decision-making starting in spaces enabling every person to participate meaningfully, and building from this to larger levels of governance by downwardly accountable institutions; and all this respectful of the needs and rights of those currently marginalised.
4. **Economic democracy**, in which local communities and individuals have control over the means of production, distribution, exchange, and markets, based on the principle of localization for basic needs and trade built on this; central to this would be the replacement of private property by the commons.
5. **Cultural diversity and knowledge democracy**, with multiple co-existing knowledge systems in the commons, respect for a diversity of ways of living, ideas and ideologies, and encouragement for creativity and innovation.

The Flower is blooming in the Kurdish soil

Each of the above spheres can be illustrated by grounded initiatives in Kurdistan. Elaboration of and more dimensions than what I can cover below, can be found on various websites such as that of the Academy of Democratic Modernity.

Radical democracy

The Kurdish freedom movement has been attempting to assert complete regional autonomy from nation-state they are contained in, and direct, radical democracy or democratic confederalism for the communes and settlements that are encompassed in these regions.

Looking at experience of Russian state, and many others where revolutionary parties came to power but failed in creating a truly democratic society, the Kurdish freedom movement transitioned rapidly from an ideology of demanding a socialist Kurdish ‘state’, to one of radical politics located in people and communes. This ideology of radical democracy has been promoted by the movement’s prime ideologue, Abdullah Öcalan, a founder and President of the Kurdish Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan, PKK) from 1978. As a voracious and perceptive reader of the history of movements around the world, Öcalan came to the conclusion that real freedom lies in people being political actors in the full sense of the word, not allowing politicians and bureaucrats to rule them. In 1999, Öcalan was abducted by NATO powers in collusion with the Turkish state, and has since then been incarcerated on an island (mostly in solitary confinement) in shocking violation of international law and human rights. Yet he has managed to communicate to the Kurdish people some of the most radical thoughts on what freedom means, especially the need for women’s liberation (to which I will return below), and given to the world an astonishingly prolific set of revolutionary thoughts and proposals.

Öcalan’s ideas on politics, power and democracy can at first sight be bewilderingly complex. He promotes *democratic modernity* instead of *capitalist modernity*; the latter, according to him, continues to enslave humanity and the rest of nature, while the former can lead to real freedom for both. He realises that the term ‘modernity’ is contested, given that it has been the colonising project of the western industrial nations for a few centuries, erasing thousands of traditional ways of being and knowing. But he is using it to denote that the movement for a people-centred politics is contemporary as much as it is historical. Opposed to the homogenising tendencies of capitalist modernity, it respects processes that are “pluralistic, probabilistic, open to alternatives, multicultural, ecological and feminist”. Centred on this basic ideology, he then propounds the need for *democratic nation*, where the peoples who identify themselves as part of a nation (not to be equated to the nation-state, but rather as a common democratic consciousness based on the principle of “unity in diversity”), with their own free will and their own ethnic, religious and other identities, are fully part of decision making. Such peoples and nations can practice *democratic confederalism*, in which self-governing communes will federate over larger regions, without sacrificing the autonomy of each of these communes. Through these, one moves to *democratic society* or *democratic socialism* (which, Öcalan is at pains to point out, is very different from the state socialism practiced in Russia, China, and others since they have been based very much on the centralisation of power in the hands of the nation-state).

Kurdish society has gone the furthest down this road in Rojava (the part of Kurdistan contained within Syria), and significant progress was also made in the Bakur region (currently occupied by Turkey) till repeated attacks by the Turkish state caused major setbacks in the last few years.

Both democratic modernity and confederalism are based on a nuanced understanding of *power* and *politics*. In the original Turkish words used by Öcalan, there is a clear distinction between *iktidarci yönetim* (power *over* others) and *demokratik yönetim* (democratic politics, or power to rule oneself – or what Hannah Arendt referred to as ‘power *with*’). Politics is the “art of freedom”, and therefore there is a need for everyone to be politicised; and for politics to be based on *moral* life, i.e. customs and rules that society establishes for conducting daily life, and “respect and commitment to the community and communal life”.

In many ways, Kurdish attempts at creating a democratic society are similar to other struggles for autonomy and self-determination, such as that of the Zapatista in Mexico and Indigenous nations in several parts of the world.

Socio-cultural justice and equality

The Kurdish movement is centred around the liberation of women from millennia of enslavement in various forms of patriarchy and masculinity. According to Öcalan, the state is a manifestation of patriarchy, and the family is a 'man's small state', so women's freedom has to be from the smallest unit of society to the largest.

Given the intensely patriarchal pillar of Kurdish (and other neighbouring ethnic) communities in the region, this has been one of the most difficult struggles for the movement. Starting with small acts of rebellion by individuals or groups of women, spurred by their increasing involvement in the rebellion against nation-state imposition including as armed guerrillas (more on this below), and vociferously advocated by Öcalan, the pillar of patriarchy (or masculinity) has been systematically eroded. Rules and norms set by the movement, such as having a co-chair woman and man for each governing, economic, and socio-cultural institution, have also helped. Perhaps most important has been the promotion of *jineoloji*, the 'science of women's freedom', an idea initially proposed by Öcalan but subsequently developed into a sophisticated, deep social science and way of life/understanding/being by many others in the women's movement, through a series of Jineoloji Academies and other activities.

The history of Kurdish women's movement and its many achievements have fascinating lessons for the whole world. Yet the struggle is far from over; women regularly face continuing dimensions of male domination. What helps is having forums where such behaviour can be brought up in an atmosphere of learning rather than confrontation, such as the *tekmil* (I return to this below). A few thousand years of sexist oppression is going to take time to overcome, to move towards a situation of what Öcalan, using a phrase likely to shock polite society, terms 'killing the dominant man'. This also includes transformations in how traditional society has viewed same-sex relations, or multiple genders and sexualities; and moving towards forms of companionship called *hevijiyana azadi* (free-life together).

Gender is not the only dimension of the socio-cultural transformation in Kurdistan. One of the most challenging issues faced by radical democracy everywhere is tension between different ethnic or national identities. In Kurdistan, the Kurds are only one of multiple ethnicities, which include Yezidis, Christians, Armenians, and Arabs. In some areas the Kurds are in the majority, in others, not. But even in the former, the movement has tried to give equal voice and space to all ethnicities, for instance in relevant decision-making institutions, in the use of languages in gatherings and educational institutions, and even in the armed guerilla units.

A unique process that has helped in continuously and regularly bringing up conflicts and tensions, or what could be considered iniquitous and exploitative behaviour, is *tekmil*. This is an institutionalised forum for criticism and self-criticism, held at various levels of social mobilisation, in PKK and other political institutions, and in the guerrilla units. The tone for this was apparently set by Öcalan and his comrades like Haki Karer, Kemal Pir, Sakine Cansiz, in the early years of the Kurdish resistance; they insisted that everyone including themselves be subjected to this. Having been involved in an organisation and some networking initiatives where such processes of feedback and openness have been attempted, I can testify to how hard it is to ensure a spirit of comradeship while criticising someone else, to be open to criticism oneself, and to be self-critical. And yet the Kurdish movement appears to have been doing this well, even in the midst of one of the most brutal conditions of war and conflict, as noted by several external observers who have spent time in Kurdistan.

These observers have also noted another fascinating experiment: regular ‘education’ sessions that movement or commune members engage in. In these, lasting a few hours to several days, the fundamentals of the revolution, such as democratic modernity and confederalism, *jineoloji*, the history of colonisation and religious dogmatism in the middle east and elsewhere, radical thoughts and practice from various parts of the world, and other such subjects are presented and dialogued. A passion for reading has also spread, spurred on in part by regular recommendations from Öcalan, even from his confinement when he was able to very occasionally meet his lawyers and family (for the last nearly two years, this too has stopped). The movement is now taking such ‘education’ sessions outside Kurdistan too; a recently set up Academy of Democratic Modernity has done several in Europe (one of which I was fortunate to be part of in August 2022).

To the extent possible, the movement has also infused the basics of middle east history and culture, an understanding of the Kurdistan movement, and the fundamentals of ecological sensitivity into the curricula and pedagogies of formal educational institutions. This (and other aspects such as community health) is severely limited, though, where nation-state imposed educational regimes remain dominant; in many cases continuing a brutal history of imposition of ‘national’ languages such as Turkish (with children being beaten in schools and adults being arrested on the streets, if they spoke Kurdish).

Economic democracy

Encompassed in all the above initiatives is also the ability to claim governance and management rights over resources important for economic survival and security. This could be collective rights to land and sea commons, water, seeds, and biodiversity, or democratic control over industrial or craft-based means of production, or social and solidarity and community economies. Since the Kurdish movement is explicitly against capitalism as also the state, its aim is to transform the economy towards ‘deomocratic communal’ forms. This includes running businesses with a cooperative model in which workers and producers are in control, “grounded in satisfying society’s fundamental needs” rather than what makes for maximum profit. It also aims to be ecologically sustainable in agriculture and manufacturing; Öcalan calls it the replacement of industrialism with ‘eco-industry’. Here too, the feminisation of the economy, emphasising the relations of caring and sharing, is crucial.

A history of colonisation of common lands, forcible displacement of 2.5 million people from their traditional homelands, continued attacks and domination by the nation-states Kurdistan is located in, a legacy of privatisation of agriculture and land, male domination of economic activity, and other such factors are major hindrances to the democratisation of the economy. But the movement is pressing on. Some impressive initiatives are the creation hundreds of cooperatives running various kinds of operations and businesses, and a unique women’s village, *Jinwar*, where sustainable livelihood options are being promoted. The movement is also keen to learn from successful initiatives at social, solidarity and community economies elsewhere in the world.

Ecological wisdom and resilience

Women’s freedom and democracy are two of the crucial pillars of the Kurdish movement, the third is ecological sensitivity; and all inextricably linked. Recognising that capitalist modernity and the nation-state have played havoc with the earth, and alienated people from the rest of nature, Öcalan started putting emphasis on this aspect from early on. In this he also relied on traditional middle-eastern society’s spiritual and ethical bonds with the rest of nature, noting for instance that “it is remarkable that the Sumerian word for freedom, ‘Amargi’, means return to mother–nature. Between human being and nature there is a

quasi love relationship”; and further that, “this past awareness of nature fostered a mentality that recognized a multitude of sanctities and divinities in nature. We may gain a better understanding of the essence of collective life if we acknowledge that it was based on the metaphysics of sanctity and divinity, stemming from reverence for the mother-woman.” The rights of nature are, for the Kurdish movement, to be respected in the same manner as those of humans. People and the planet, not power and profits, are the fulcrum of revolution. The philosophy of *hevjiyana azadi* should be extended to not only human-human relations, but relations between humans and other species too.

But, as the movement acknowledges, this is amongst the least developed aspect of the revolution, its practical applications beginning in seriousness only in the 1990s. The history of ecological damage by colonial and nation-state powers in the region, the sustained siege of Kurdistan, the imposition of destructive infrastructural projects, the industrialisation of agriculture, and continued reliance on revenue sources like oil, make the goals of regeneration and sustainability very hard to achieve. Amongst the first ecological movements of recent times in the region are campaigns against mega-hydro projects like *Ilisu* on the Tigris river and dams on Munzur river in Dersim. Campaigns like Make Rojava Green Again involve large-scale tree-plantation, cleaning water sources, community gardens, and other such activities. The ‘women’s village’ Jinwar mentioned above, with goals of sustainable self-reliance, is another experiment, from which the movement hopes to learn for other similar initiatives. In many of the municipalities where political parties supported by the Kurdish movement like HDP are ruling, urban greening, public transportation, cleaning waterbodies, decent housing for the poor, and other measures have been seriously attempted. A broad platform, the Mesopotamia Ecology Movement, has aided in both resistance and in taking discussions and action on environment further through provincial and thematic commissions.

Interestingly, in the last three decades the guerrilla units of the Kurdish movement have also laid stress on ecological living. This includes putting minimum stress on nature in the mountains they live in, severely restricting tree-felling and hunting to where absolutely necessary, not throwing out any plastic or metal wastes, helping to regenerate ecosystems where degraded in the past, and continuously discussing ecology as part of their ‘education’ sessions.

Intersectionality and values

Discrimination and marginalisation can be intersectional, e.g. environmentally poor working and living conditions are most pronounced for those who are marginalised in race, caste or class terms, or inadequate access to nutritious food can build on other discriminations against women. And so the responses to these, in many of the above initiatives, are also intersectional or cutting across the five spheres.

In the Kurdish movement, there is a clear and often pre-configured intersectionality. This is most explicit with regard to the gender dimension in each aspect of transformation, political, social, cultural, ecological. According to the Kurds, revolution is not in the future, but is *now*; and it is not piecemeal but holistic, which means simultaneously living it in all its dimensions as far as possible. They do not want to repeat the mistakes of past revolutionary movements, where a lack of prefiguration or of simultaneous transformations in both external and internal dimensions led to multiple failures, even after the movement took control.

In trying to integrate the radicalisation of political decision-making with socio-cultural transformation, economic democracy, and ecological sanity, movements like the Kurdish one illustrate a Radical Ecological

Democracy or (to use a term arising from the context in India), *eco-swaraj*. They assert local decision-making while also embodying responsibility for other people and for the rest of nature. And they are based on a set of values and norms, many passed down through the ages, such as community living, solidarity, interdependence, and diversity; many are more recent, such as radical democracy, women's freedom and gender equality. The frameworks of democratic society and *jineoloji* incorporate these and other values in ways that are lived every day, not only remaining theoretical constructs. None are perfectly achieved, as Kurdish activists and intellectuals will themselves point out in the tradition of constant self-criticism. But at least sincere attempts are constantly being made, and many are visible in the political, socio-cultural, and economic activities described above.

Perhaps one of the most difficult compromises the movement has had to make is to take to armed resistance. Violence is essentially against its philosophy. For the first many years it tried negotiating with the Turkish state, seeking an autonomous region. But as military aggression along with violent cultural and economic domination by Turkey continued, and both here as elsewhere in Turkistan the Kurds faced a near-extirmination situation, the urge for self-defence led the movement to arm itself. It has however explicitly stated that violence will be used *only* for self-defence, never as offence, and that it will continue to seek peaceful resolution. It has repeatedly announced unilateral ceasefires, to try such a resolution, but Turkey has not reciprocated or honoured these. Its utterly shameless incarceration of Öcalan, for 23 years now, has also been a stumbling block to a meaningful peace process.

The full blooming of the Flower of Transformation is going to involve difficult, long-term struggles. But what the Kurdish society is trying to achieve can be called a 'nowtopia' in the making, and many more are visible on the horizon around the world, a veritable Pluriverse of practices and worldviews. While not in any way belittling the enormous challenges posed to them by the dominant military-industrial-capitalist-statist system, and continuing forms of patriarchy, racism and anthropocentrism, these inspirational pin-pricks in the darkness provide hope for a saner, more just world.

To repeat, as the Kurds say, revolution is *now*. And it is on the foundations of *jîn-jîyan-azadî* - women, life, freedom!

Meer, the magazine in which this article was published, is one of the world's leading online magazines published in 6 languages.



Duran Kalkan sees opportunities for democratic emancipation in fragmentation of global powers

ANF | 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

In a text published on the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) website, Duran Kalkan from the PKK Executive Committee comments on the global political situation and perspectives for the revolutionary movements.

“Capitalism in the imperialist phase means war”

Kalkan writes that there has been an ongoing state of war since the beginning of the First World War. The form of expression of capitalism in its imperialistic phase is war with the conflicts in the Middle East at its center: “Capitalism wants to swallow the Middle East. The Middle East is still resisting and this war is mainly due to the stubbornness of the resistance.” Kalkan underscores the importance of the clashes between the capitalist powers, but that this clash is primarily being waged as a war to conquer the Middle East.

“World War III will be fought in the Middle East”

Kalkan looks back at history: “The First World War started in this context, but the October Revolution took some of the momentum out of it. Fascism, which erupted in the Second World War, was defeated by many revolutionary movements. In the era of real socialism, this war was called the 'Cold War'. The existence of real socialism triggered the Cold War. When real socialism dissolved, the Third World War came onto the agenda. This is a war in the Middle East. This war is really a war to conquer the Middle East and to destroy Middle Eastern society, its past and present. In Kurdistan it is waged as a genocidal war. The hegemonic capitalist world system that emerged with World War I divided Kurdistan, disregarded the Kurds and forced them under genocidal regimes. The Kurds resisted and are still resisting. Arabia was divided into 22 parts, which are still fighting back a little. This ongoing war is a war aimed at destroying the existence of a Kurdish and Arab society.”

Acting in the system leads to dictatorship

Kalkan takes a look at the prospects for the region and the world: “It doesn't look like things are going to continue like this. The forces waging the war have no solution to offer. This also applies to the global capital system. By sticking to the national status quo with its power structure, it is also not possible to find a solution. No matter how much such forces define themselves as revolutionary, moderate and solution-oriented: in the end they create an anti-Kurdish, fascist dictatorship. The development of the AKP/MHP regime is exemplary in this regard. The system no longer has the power to produce solutions, to change and innovate. It is difficult for the forces of the system to bring about a change in mentality and politics. For this reason, there is no sign of overcoming the crisis and chaos of the global system of capitalist modernity. The war caused by the crisis and chaos continues to spread across the region.

World revolution is the way out

The only thing that remains is the revolution. Just as the October Revolution was able to temporarily end the war, so now the only alternative that will offer a way out of this war is a democratic revolution in the Middle East, even a world revolution. If the October Revolution could have become a world revolution, humanity would have been liberated from capitalism and imperialism. The October Revolution could not become a world revolution, it failed. Because it failed, humanity and nature have suffered so much damage that we are now almost facing an apocalypse.”

“Capitalism is a regime of permanent crisis”

Kalkan calls for a thorough understanding of capitalism: “Capitalism means crisis and chaos. It is certain that these consequences deepen day by day. Capitalism consumes nature, society and the individual. It's not about development, but about the complete consumption of all the basics of life. The situation poses a serious threat and danger to humanity, to the entire globe, indeed to every life. Because capitalism does not mean the organization of work and production in terms of social life, but in terms of exploitation, plunder and robbery. Capitalism is a form of exploitation. The goal is maximum profit. State and private monopoly has reached this point. There can be no capitalism without crises, chaos, contradictions and conflicts.

“There is no solution in capitalism”

It's not very realistic to look back from today and ask: 'Will capitalism renew itself, will it find solutions within itself? Will a solution come from Europe or America? If not, will Africa or Asia lead the way? Will a solution come from Germany or France?' That is the wrong approach. Capitalism is a form of exploitation. It is the organization of all life and work for exploitation and maximum profit. It is a regime of total destruction. So it is a system of plunder, robbery, consumption, dissent and conflict.

“Revolutions have alleviated the crisis of capitalism”

Historically, crises have been periodically analyzed as 'First Depression Period, Second Depression Period, Third Depression Period'. The continuity of the third period has been emphasized. These reviews were incorrect. In fact, capitalism is not a periodic but a continuous regime of depression and crisis. From time to time, revolutions exacerbated or weakened crises. The 19th century had the revolutions in Europe, the revolutions in France from 1830 onwards, the European revolutions of 1848, the Paris Commune effort of 1871, the October Revolution, and the revolutionary movements that grew out of the October Revolution in the 20th century. In fact, the revolutionary front has temporarily alleviated the crisis and depression of capitalism. If there hadn't been a revolution, there wouldn't have been this relief.



Interview

Muzaffer Ayata: Turkey is a mafia state

PKK Central Committee member Muzaffer Ayata analyzes the current situation of the Turkish government and states that Erdoğan's regime is worse than the military coup regime of 1980.

ZERDEST RUSTEM | BEHDINAN | 25 SEPTEMBER 2022

In the third part of his interview with ANF, Muzaffer Ayata, a member of the PKK's Central Committee, calls on the Turkish state to change its attitude towards the Kurdish question and abandon its policy of denial and annihilation that has been fruitless for a century.

Why does the current Turkish government consider the Kurdish question a "terror issue"?

The Kurdish question is a 100-year-old problem and started in Turkey with the founding of the Republic. Their construction created this problem. Was there a PKK when Şêx Saîd and Seyîd Riza and tens of thousands of people were massacred and exiled? It is a historical social problem. According to the constitution, there are no Kurds, only Turks. The state wants to turn everyone into a Turk. But that is not a command of God or a law of nature. The Kurds don't want to be Turks. The state has been pursuing this policy for 100 years and has failed. That should end and the constitution must be rewritten.

Kurds and Turks live together in one territory. They have a lot in common. Why is there so much bloodshed, violence and denial? There are about 40 million Kurds in the four parts of Kurdistan. They have status in South Kurdistan, and a recognized status is developing in Rojava. In order to destroy that too, the Turkish state is attacking with no mercy. Turkey has used up all its economic resources and ideological reserves for this. What happens if the AKP/MHP alliance wins another election? What would happen if the regime killed and made more Kurds suffer? You can't turn back history, you can't construct it and write it however you want. If that was the case, Mustafa Kemal would have done it already.

If the Kurdish question had been approached differently, what would the situation be like today?

Turkey would not be so isolated and discredited in the world today if it had not been at war with the Kurds and if it had not plunged headlong into the war in Syria. It would not have exhausted all its internal and external resources. On the contrary, the Kurds would have become a bridge between Syria, Turkey and Iraq. With a democratic model, Turkey would have been the rising star of the Middle East. Trade and economic relations had developed at a much higher level. Turkey would have become rich and could easily have joined the European Union. There would be no obstacle to joining the European Union.

How great is the damage that this war policy has caused in the Middle East?

Turkey has thrown itself into the war in Syria and waged war on Syria. In this war, the ISIS mercenaries were able to enter Syria via Turkey without any problems. All this evil was directed against the Kurdish people. The Turkish state set ISIS on the Kurds. While the whole world was fighting ISIS, Turkey supported it. They wanted to suffocate and destroy the Kurds, especially in Syria. The Kurds fought hard and paid a high price for the fight against ISIS. Together with the Arab population, they cleaned up the areas and began to administer them together. Despite Turkish pressure, the Arab population did not align themselves with the mercenaries and Turkey. Together with the Kurds, they followed their own line and were not hostile to the Syrian regime. Because the Kurds were concerned with their own identity and a free life. They didn't have to be enemies of anyone or emulate anyone. Turkey did not digest this. She gathered all the mercenary groups in Syria around her and had them attack the Kurdish population. These mercenaries are now a scourge of Turkey. Fascist demagoguery in Turkey spreads the view that the Kurds and the PKK are

Turkey's shackles and that if they are defeated, Turkey will conquer the world. With such demagoguery, their own population is being deceived.

The chains and black spots are ISIS and al-Nusra. In Syria, murderers are unleashed on the population. The occupied territories have turned into a paradise for murderers, criminals and mercenaries. Turkey is now a major threat to global security. The Arab world has withdrawn its protective hands from the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS and al-Nusra. Note that no Arab country supports these groups anymore. They don't accept them on their territory. But Erdoğan is doing it. In doing so, he is threatening the Arab world. Turkey is blackmailing Europe with the refugees it has taken in. It even threatens to bring IS and other organizations in Europe into play. Because he always has them at hand.

If we look closely, all the leaders of ISIS were killed in the areas under Turkish occupation. The safe zones for IS leaders are the areas under Turkish control. Some of them were killed or captured in operations (by the SDF and the International Coalition). There are also those who were not captured, who are not well known. They bet on Turkey. Turkey sponsors them and if the Turkish state wants to, they change their names. The whole world has declared al-Nusra a terrorist organization. Turkey also had to do this, but they established a kingdom for al-Nusra (in Idlib). The Turkish army protects them.

The cracks in Turkey's internal balance are becoming more and more apparent. Meanwhile, elected representatives of the Kurdish people are increasingly being targeted. What does that mean?

The Turkish government has turned into an organized crime association. It pursues a policy of repression, deception and psychological warfare against its own people; it opposes those who criticize, resist, demand justice and democracy; it marginalizes and humiliates those who want peace and democracy. Imagine that the Kurds took part in the elections according to Turkish law. Their papers are examined by the public prosecutor's office and they are told that their candidacy in the elections is not a problem. The winner of the election is then designated a terrorist. Mayors and MPs are thrown in jail. Their immunity must be lifted in a hurry.

There is nothing Semra Güzel (the recently imprisoned HDP MP) has done. Yet, she was stigmatized because of a photo taken with a guerrilla fighter. All of Turkey's security systems have been turned upside down. Turkey is in the process of collapse. One acts as if one has never seen a guerrilla fighter in Turkey. As if the guerrillas came from space. Kurds shouldn't have anything to do with each other, shouldn't greet each other and shouldn't meet. They literally throw people in the pot and cook them and then dance around and are happy to eat them. Oh, we got Semra - what an operation...they say! You have no shame. Semra Güzel is a Member of Parliament. Her immunity was wrongly lifted and she was portrayed as a criminal.

Meanwhile, all the robbers and criminals gather around the government. Interior Minister Soylu has appeared in pictures with all of them. No proceedings will be opened against them. They are Erdoğan's favourites. Erdoğan is a man who is finished in every respect.

Angela Merkel was chancellor for 16 years. She resigned with respect and by the rules, but Erdoğan is not playing the game by the rules. Today everyone in Turkey, including opposition circles, is saying that Erdoğan will start a civil war. Erdoğan will manipulate the election. Erdoğan will declare a state of emergency. Erdoğan will start a war somewhere. However, in an environment of crisis and chaos, he will either

win the elections or postpone them. These options are currently being discussed. Such a thing was not discussed in the time of Ecevit and Mesut Yılmaz. Erdoğan has been in power for 20 years and has brought the country to this state. Turkey has broken all democratic conventions. He has made all institutions dysfunctional, hollowing them out and binding them to himself. He created a Hitler-style model of government. If you analyze Hitler's style of government, you can see how similar they are.

How does this fit into Turkey's history?

The technique of domination is based on undermining the law through crises and chaos. In the history of Turkey, the law has never been so massively discredited as it is today. Even in the period after September 12 (1980 military coup), this was not the case. The judiciary did not intervene so massively. Judges and prosecutors have never been made into such cheap pawns. The religious orders in Turkey have never been so powerful and rich. They have never been so much the extension of political power. There have been religious communities with government ties before. The government benefited from them and they benefited from the government, but never to the extent that they do today.

The religious communities in Turkey have lost their spiritual side. They ceased to be institutions in the service of religion. Erdoğan ruined them and finished them off. Erdoğan has done the greatest evil to Islam in Turkey. He devoured Erbakan's entire legacy. After 50 years of work, Milli Görüş was at least an alternative in Turkey, a hope in Islamic circles. We criticize them, that's another question, but Erbakan had respect in Islamic circles. He described it as an "honest assignment". Erdoğan has created a mafia-like gang of robbers. He brought about an inflation regime. He plays with the stock market and interest rates. People are getting poorer. Currently, banks have quadrupled their profits as part of inflation. But the cost of living has skyrocketed. Turkey is a world leader in this respect, despite the publication of false figures on the inflation rate.

This shows the level of impoverishment in society. You rob people, you take everything they have. All resources and wealth are concentrated in specific circles. There was hope, a quest, a dream of a future in Islam. Now Erdoğan has devoured them. He destroyed the Islamic communities in Turkey, hollowed them out. He made them the support and plaything of power. He tied them to the government. He gave them material wealth and took away spirituality. He gutted them all and suffocated their spirits. Erdoğan is so desperate for power that he won't let go, even if he dies in the process. He says the homeland is in danger, it's a matter of survival. You are surrounded by enemies, the imperialists are attacking, you are resisting the world... It's all nonsense. He goes to all the imperialists in the world and asks them: "Support me, let's make a deal, I will make concessions." That's what he says.

Turkey will be extradited to Putin. Never before, not even in Ottoman history, has Turkey made so many concessions to Russia. Tenders for nuclear power plants, missile systems that cannot be used, billions of dollars, all for Erdoğan's regime. At the same time, he signs agreements with NATO against Russia and also tells Putin that he should come and the Kurds will be massacred together. Then he will not participate in the embargo and support Russia.

It is obvious that nobody, only Erdoğan, wants a war in Syria. He provokes and arms all of his mercenaries. He will attack the Kurds or the regime. He has prepared his army and says: "Let me go, I will dissolve the Kurdish areas, I will remove the Kurds from there and replace them with mercenaries". He announces a genocidal plan against the Kurds.



Murat Karayilan: Next three months are crucial for guerrilla struggle in Kurdistan

ANF | BEHDINAN | 23 SEPTEMBER 2022

Murat Karayilan, a member of the PKK Executive Committee, told ANF in this interview that the next three months are crucial for the guerrilla struggle in Kurdistan. “It is not for nothing that we speak of a struggle for existence. That's the reality. Therefore, everyone in this process should play their part. This period is a very important time in the history of our struggle, and we want to win in this process,” said Karayilan, adding: “If I were not a Kurd, if I were an impartial person, I would support those who struggle to defend themselves with their own resources. People should have a conscience, a certain honor.”

However, Karayilan also emphasizes that the PKK as an ideological movement cannot be crushed.

A week ago, the HPG published a war balance sheet for the past five months. The balance sheet made it clear once again how comprehensive the war was. How do you evaluate these five months?

The last five months have been very important for us. Another week has now passed. For five months and a week, there has been a constant and all-out war in Zap, Metîna and Avaşîn. This is a new situation in the history of Kurdistan and in our history of struggle. For the first time in more than five months, the Turkish occupation is being resisted in the same place, and the Turkish state is being stopped. This is not an ordinary situation. As I said before, this is a new situation in the history of our people, in our history of struggle. Despite the Turkish state's support from inside and outside and the use of all modern weapons, including internationally banned weapons, the Turkish state has not achieved the desired result. Everyone should know that this war is something new. Fighting on one side is a huge force, large in numbers, possessing all the technology of the time, and on the other is a force possessing conviction, courage, expertise, knowledge of the terrain, and tactical knowledge. In other words, in this war we put human will against modern technology and banned weapons.

The new tactical methods we developed surprised the enemy. Presumably he did not expect that such a deep, rich tactic could be carried out in a coordinated manner. An important achievement is being made in this war, and it is being done in a spirit of sacrifice. A great sacrifice is made. The courage shown today by Kurdish women and men, as well as Arabs, is a great example of the sublimation of the human will. We believe that the new ways and methods we have developed in this war will be an example for all, especially for those forces that do not have the technical means against large armies and modern weapons to fight their countries and themselves with defending guerrilla methods within the perspective of people's revolutionary war.

As you know, there were fortresses in the past. In the past, peoples used castles to defend themselves against large armies. Now there are no more above-ground fortresses, because these can be destroyed with modern weapons. The Kurdish freedom guerrillas, meanwhile, have built underground fortresses and fight in the terrain with special teams that turn every tree into a position against the enemy. The same applies to the underground. The Turkish state can no longer move freely in the field and occupy terrain with its army as before. If he wants to move from one hill to another hill, covering only a distance of one kilometre, he is afraid, because on the land path he encounters many obstacles. For this reason, he first bombards the place he wants to go with planes and missiles. Then the cobras [helicopter] come and shoot. In the dust created by the bombing, troops are dropped from Sikorsky helicopters. This is the Turkish state's current method of occupation. He cannot invade and advance as before. He comes out of the air. The Turkish army is fighting us from the air and with forbidden weapons. We fight them with the will, the courage and the commitment of the people.

Where would the Turkish army be now if they hadn't been stopped in the Zap?

The political consequences for our entire people are also important. If the Turkish army hadn't been held up for five months in Zap, Avaşîn and Metîna, who knows where they would have gone and how far they would have come by now. She would have extended her dominion over the people of the region even further. However, she is stuck here. For this reason, the resistance is of great importance for the Kurdish nation and of great importance for the future of the people in the region, especially the Arab people.

The Turkish state is building roads in South Kurdistan and wants to consolidate its position in the occupied territories. What is its goal?

It is true that the Turkish state builds roads everywhere it goes, spending a lot of money. This shows that it wants to stay there permanently. He's building his system. What is his goal now? He used to fight us within the borders set for Turkey. There have also been cross-border attacks, but he has always withdrawn. So his strategy was inward. But after the fight against ISIS, the Rojava Revolution has developed and gained status. The Kurdish people came to the fore in Rojava and the other parts of Kurdistan and the Middle East. The Turkish state was afraid of that. During these development processes, a dialogue was also held with Rêber Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] on Imralı. This dialogue culminated in the Dolmabahçe Memorandum in February 2015, which was created before the eyes of the world public. It was signed by HDP MPs and representatives of the Turkish state. An agreement should be reached between the Kurdish and Turkish sides. However, the state got scared. Tayyip Erdoğan rejected the agreement and the Turkish state developed a new strategy and concept for itself. They said the state had a survival problem, the Kurds had become a force of its own and already had foreign powers behind them, they wanted to crush Turkey and that this threat had to be eliminated. Therefore, interventions should not only be made within the borders of Turkey, but also in southern and western Kurdistan [Rojava]. They said it was already a mistake to recognize the status of Southern Kurdistan [Kurdistan Region of Iraq] and Rojava should not have any status either.

This is how they came up with a new concept and in 2015 they declared war on us. They speak openly of a thirty-kilometre zone beyond their borders, which stretches from Afrin in Rojava to Xakurke and Sidekan in southern Kurdistan. Their ultimate goal, however, is to occupy the territory within the borders of Misak-ı Milli [National Pact; a plan drawn up in the Ottoman parliament in the early 1920s, which en-

visages a Turkish territory including Thrace, northern Syria and northern Iraq]. They want control of three parts of Kurdistan.

What is your comment on the role of the KDP? A foreign power occupies the country and the KDP participates in this occupation. What can you say about that?

The KDP should be asked this question, because we don't really understand it either. It shouldn't have been like this. When the Turkish state created this concept, it was not a hidden concept, it was very open about what they wanted to do. The Turkish state said we have a survival problem, it's a war for existence and non-existence for us, and that's how it started. Our aim in this process was to react as a whole; all Kurdish forces together in the form of a common policy. It was less about a common struggle and more about a common position and mutual protection. In 2013 a meeting was held on our initiative, a step was taken for a Kurdish National Congress, but then this effort was stopped. We wanted to discuss it again, and our movement met with many forces. Two further talks took place with the KDP. I was present at the two meetings in 2015 and 2016. As already mentioned, Turkey has developed a new concept. Turkey's new strategy is dangerous for the Kurdish people. We said that we should be partners and that there are only simple problems between us. If problems arise between us in Rojava, in Shengal and wherever, our delegations can sit down and discuss them. We agreed on that at the meeting. Then the delegation should have been convened, but no date was set. We realized that when the KDP met with us, they also met with Turkey. In this process, too, it became clear that the KDP had chosen to trade with Turkey and not with us. This has led to a split in Kurdish politics. We do not want this situation to deteriorate further and continue for many years to come.

The Turkish state also liquidates collaborators

I want to underline five points here. First: the KDP representatives should know that the Turkish state relied on Kurdish collaborators in the fight against the Kurds in both the Ottoman and Republican eras and subsequently liquidated them. In Dersim, for example, some tribes resisted while other tribes sided with the state. But when the resistance was broken, all were exiled. The Turkish state eliminates the Kurds who work with it after its job is done. For this reason, no matter how much the Barzani family is now collaborating, Turkey will one day also be against them. This is the first fact.

Second: If there were no PKK, the Turkish state would not take any Kurds seriously. That too is a fact. The Turkish state would not have established any relations with Başûr [South Kurdistan]. In the past there were no relationships, it only started with our appearance. Then Rêber Apo was captured and the Turkish state said that the PKK was finished. As a result, the relationships were gradually reduced and made a red line. As our struggle intensified again, the Turkish state resumed relations with the KDP and the Başûr movements and officially abolished the red line. That's a fact. Now he is occupying Başûr and it is clear that this occupation is with the consent of the KDP. No one can remove the Turkish state from the places where it is currently based. Because the Turkish state has a different style. He never leaves the place he enters. And that endangers the future and the status of Southern Kurdistan. 30,000 soldiers of the Turkish army are now stationed in Bashur. We say that this policy endangers the future of the population of South Kurdistan. It even poses a threat to Iraq.

Thirdly, there were big massacres in Bakur [North Kurdistan] as well as once in Bashur. We have been fighting this state for 50 years. So far we have suffered more than 40,000 casualties and there are over

10,000 prisoners. Our chair, Rêber Apo is currently in İmralı prison. With our resistance we want to get the Turkish state to find a solution. The situation is clear. If the Turkish state really wants to be friends with the Kurds outside its borders, with the Kurds of Başûr, it must first recognize the identity of the Kurds living within its borders. As long as the Turkish state denies the Kurds within its borders, it cannot be friends with the Kurds outside. That's a fact. We want to find a solution, but the contribution that the KDP is making to the Turkish state is also blocking the way to a solution for Bakur. In other words, the KDP prevents us from weakening the state and forcing a solution. She helps the state in every matter. It helps the state to crush the guerrillas. If the state destroys the guerrillas, it will commit genocide across Kurdistan. The KDP makes a mistake. What does it mean to provide so much support with logistics, intelligence, encirclement, road closures and everything else? We didn't expect that much, so the KDP should explain itself.

The PKK cannot be crushed

Fourth, everyone should know that the PKK cannot be crushed. The PKK is an ideological movement. This ideology has spread to millions of people. Millions of Kurdish women and youth, as well as Kurdistan's neighbours, from Arab to Turkish people, defend this idea. We don't know why the KDP is countering millions of people. Will the enmity against millions be forgotten? It will not be forgotten. There was a war among us Kurds before, from 1992 to the 2000s. We wanted to close this chapter and have made great efforts to ensure that Kurds never go to war against Kurds again. That was the decision of our leadership and our movement. The PKK is an idea, the PKK is politics, the PKK is society, it has millions of people. Why is the KDP making enemies? What is their interest in it? What agreement has they reached with Turkey? We really don't understand. We should also point out that the KDP will not gain anything from this, but it will suffer.

Fifth: We are in the 21st century. The world has evolved and problems are solved in dialogue. The Turkish state and the other occupying powers in Kurdistan say that the Kurds are not a nation, they are tribes who fight each other and do not make common policies in the interests of the people. Isn't our mutual approach shameful for Kurdish politics? Isn't it a shame that the US is mediating so that the ENKS and the Autonomous Administration can come together in Rojava? Don't we have minds of our own? There are many embarrassing and shameful situations right now and we want to change that. These kinds of policies may have worked for the KDP in the 1980s and 1990s, they may have been a basis for recovery, but no longer. The year is 2022 and we are in the digital age. The world now knows everything. How long can governments survive that stand against society and rely only on money and military might? The KDP should turn back, because in order to survive in this country we must have a common strategy as a nation.

What can be done in this situation? What should the public do?

We are at war and the situation is critical. We don't like to talk like that, but our people and friends should know that the situation is critical. It's not about who has how much power and who doesn't. It is about the gains of the Kurdish people in this historic and fragile process. We have a cruel enemy in front of us who wants to play off the Kurdish forces against each other in front of everyone. This is incompatible with the interests of the Kurdish people.

We have no expectations of any state or power and are only attached to our people. I therefore call on all Kurds to take responsibility for this situation. The resistance in Zap, Avaşın and Metına affects all Kurds

and people from all parts of Kurdistan are fighting there. If we defeat the enemy there, all Kurds will become stronger, and this is especially true for Başûr. This resistance must be supported, and those who do not support it should not oppose it and denounce it to the enemy.

If I weren't a Kurd, if I were an impartial person, I would support those who are fighting all of this with their own means. We are wronged. People should have a conscience, a certain honour.

Is there anything you would like to say to end this conversation?

We are going through an extraordinary phase and the next three months in particular are very important for the guerrilla war. Because the enemy wants results, and we want results as well. We need support for this. It is not for nothing that we speak of a struggle for existence, a war of to be or not to be. That's the reality. Therefore, everyone in this process should do what they can. Young people should join the guerrillas, women, patriots, everyone should do their job. This period is a very important time in the history of our struggle and we want to win in the process. We believe in ourselves and if we stick to the previous ways and methods, we will be successful. Five months of resistance made victory inevitable. But of course nothing comes by itself. We need to make more effort and get more involved in this process. If that's the case, I believe we will have great victories during this time. With this in mind, I wish everyone every success.

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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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