

# THE İMRALI POST

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

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# Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

Fact-finding mission: “Thrown into a well and buried”

International Initiative | Friday, May 19, 2023

## 2023 İmralı Peace Delegation presents its findings in Reykjavík

Delegation reminds the Council of Europe of its founding principles

The *International Peace Delegation to İmralı* held a fact-finding mission to Turkey on 10–13 May 2023. The members of the delegation included Dennis O’Hearn, Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas, Laura Castel, Senator from Spain and a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and Ögmundur Jónasson, Honorary Associate of PACE and former Minister of Interior of Iceland. The delegation met with several human rights institutions and representatives of movements and other NGOs. Their report will be available soon.

Ögmundur Jónasson, delegation member and a spokesperson of the International Initiative, hosted a press conference in Reykjavík, Iceland on 17 May 2023. Along with the other delegation members, one of the spokespersons of the International Initiative, Havin Gunesser, also took part in the press conference. Time and place of this press conference were significant, because it was held at the same time as the summit of the Council of Europe in Reykjavík

While the members of the delegation presented the results of their fact-finding mission to Turkey, they emphasized that İmralı Island — Turkey’s equivalent to Robben Island — is a place where the European Convention on Human Rights has been systematically circumvented for more than 24 years now. For the last two and a half years, the prisoners on the island have been without any contact to lawyers, relatives, or anybody else. The whole island is a black hole — right in the middle of Europe.

Thus, the speakers called on the Council of Europe stay true to its founding principles and to make sure that the Convention is implemented in the case of the Kurdish people’s and Abdullah Öcalan’s rights and that recommendations of the CPT and the decisions of the ECtHR are implemented. Furthermore, all the speakers drew attention to the importance of resolving the Kurdish question peacefully and politically, and the key role Abdullah Öcalan plays in that.

[Watch a recording of the meeting here: https://youtu.be/Es0Bgjk\\_jAk](https://youtu.be/Es0Bgjk_jAk) (English starts after a few minutes)

Further coverage of the visit and the press conference:

- 18 May 2023, MedyaNews: [International press conference urges end of isolation in Turkey’s İmralı prison](#)

- 12 May 2023, MedyaNews: [International delegation visits Turkey to call for end to isolation of Abdullah Öcalan](#)
- 11 May 2023, ANF News: [İmrali Peace Delegation visits Öcalan's lawyers and discusses isolation](#)

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## Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Vigil in Strasbourg marks its 570th week

ANF | STRASBOURG | 24 MAY 2023

The Freedom Vigil launched by the Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan Initiative on June 25, 2012 in Strasbourg to demand the physical freedom of Kurdish leader Öcalan and to end the absolute isolation imposed on him continues.

Taşdemir Anlı, İsmail Coşkun Kıncal and Civan Akpolat from Paris took over the vigil in its 570th week.

In a statement, the new group noted that no news had been received from the Kurdish leader for over two years and emphasized that they would "always be here" for the freedom of Öcalan.

The activists said that the recent attacks against Maxmur and Shengal aimed to destroy all Kurdish achievements. They added: "But we will not give up. We will continue to fight back as long as we live and until our leader is free."

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## Families of İmrali prisoners apply for a visit

ANF | 26 MAY 2023

There has been no news from Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan for over two years and there is absolute isolation imposed on him.

Abdullah Öcalan's brother Mehmet Öcalan and his guardian Mazlum Dinç, Ömer Hayri Konar's brother Ali Konar, Hamili Yıldırım's brother Polat Yıldırım and Veysi Aktaş's sister Melihe Çetin applied to the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office to visit their relatives.

Families also applied to the Directorate of İmrali F Type High Security Closed Penal Institution through the Bursa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

Lawyers are requesting to meet with Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan twice a week. However, applications for visits are systematically left unanswered. In some cases, months later, lawyers are informed that disciplinary action has been taken against the Kurdish people's leader and therefore no visit can be granted.

In a statement on May 2, 2023, Asrın Law Office said: “We have not heard anything from Öcalan since 25 March 2021. Despite all the requests and efforts of his lawyers and his relatives, we are not aware of the living conditions and state of health of Öcalan and our three other clients on Imralı. This situation worries us and the whole society.”

A sham debate emerged in Turkey recently, speculating about talks with Abdullah Öcalan in the run-up to the presidential and parliamentary elections on May 14. The Asrın Law Office, which represents Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners on the prison island, assessed these rumours as manipulation, saying: “We have to emphasise again that we have not heard anything from Öcalan since 25 March 2021. Despite all the requests and efforts of his lawyers and his relatives, we are not aware of the living conditions and state of health of Öcalan and our three other clients on Imralı. This situation worries us and the whole society.”

The statement by Asrın Law Office pointed out that: “During the election campaign, the political centres are engaged in a propaganda race around Öcalan. Under these circumstances, we would like to inform the whole society that the lack of news and the strict isolation conditions continue and that all these discussions are going on without Öcalan's knowledge, contribution and participation. What is right and should be done is to give Öcalan the opportunity to meet with his lawyers immediately. The law and minimum ethics also require this. Under these conditions, where Öcalan has no opportunity to express himself, we don't think speculative discussions that would mean ignoring or blocking out the reality of isolation and lack of news are right.”

In its statement published on May 2 in connection with the talks in question on Imralı, the Asrın Law Office said:

- We have not received any messages from Öcalan and our three other clients after 25 March 2021, when a telephone conversation with his brother was interrupted and could not be continued. We do not know the reason for this interruption.
- We have no information about the detention conditions, the treatment and the state of health of our clients on Imralı.
- According to Article 66/3 of Law No. 5275, convicts have the right “to make immediate use of the prison's telephone and fax facilities in the event of the death, serious illness, epidemic disease or natural disaster of their heirs, descendants, spouses and siblings”. Nevertheless, Öcalan and our other clients were deprived of this right even in the case of death, let alone illness, of their family members, and this prohibition was not relaxed even during the 6 February earthquakes.
- Öcalan could only use a single-channel radio for 14 years and only had access to television, which is available to all prisoners, in 2013. However, as a report from May 2018 shows, TV channels were restricted, and newspapers were delivered after a delay of 40 days.

- Öcalan was held in solitary confinement in the island prison for ten years and nine months from 16 February 1999 to 17 November 2009, after which five more of our clients were transferred to İmralı. Although these prisoners were later exchanged, as outlined in the 2016 and 2019 CPT (Committee for the Prevention of Torture) reports, our clients could only meet for six hours a week and spend the rest of the time alone in their cells.

### Concerns increased after the CPT visit to İmralı

Concerns over the situation of the Kurdish people's leader increased after the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) visited Turkey on September 20-29, 2022. In a statement on 3 October, the CPT announced that İmralı F Type High Security Prison was among the institutions it visited.

However, Asrın Law Office reported that during the CPT visit, there was no meeting with Abdullah Öcalan, and that this increased their concerns. Asrın Law Office said on 29 November: "We have heard that Mr. Öcalan did not see the CPT delegation during its visit to İmralı Island in September 2022."

### Conditions of extraordinary isolation

The İmralı F Type High Security Closed Prison was built specifically for Abdullah Öcalan in February 1999 and has since been operated based on a special status and through special practices.

Under the so-called aggravated execution regime, Abdullah Öcalan and his fellow prisoners, Hamili Yıldırım, Ömer Hayri Konar and Veysi Aktaş, have been held under conditions of extraordinary isolation for a long time, 24 years in terms of Öcalan and eight years each in terms of other inmates.

Despite all their attempts, lawyers from the Istanbul-based Asrın Law Office, which represents Abdullah Öcalan and his three fellow prisoners, have not been able to receive even a single sign of life from their clients since 25 March 2021. They could not obtain any information regarding their health status, their detention conditions, their legal situation in 2022. It has been 23 months that their clients have not been heard from in any way.

### Öcalan held in a single cell since 1999

According to the "[2022 Annual Assessment Report on Rights Violations and the Current Conditions in İmralı Island Prison](#)" released by Asrın Law Office on 15 February 2023, Abdullah Öcalan has been held in a single cell in İmralı Island Prison since 15 February 1999. For the first ten years, he was the only prisoner in the island prison. In November 2009, new cells were added to the prison and five other prisoners were brought in. Nevertheless, Öcalan continued to be kept in solitary confinement 23 hours a day on weekdays and 24 hours a day on weekends.

Until 2011, Öcalan's right to see his lawyers was limited to one hour one day a week, but in fact, he was constantly prevented from availing himself of this limited right, with the authorities alleging the pretext of "adverse weather conditions" or a "technical defect" of the coaster going to the island. In the twelve years since 27 July 2011, he has only been able to see his lawyer five times, between May and August 2019. The last of these five meetings took place on 7 August 2019.

Since 2014, Öcalan has received five visits from family members. His brother's visit to the prison on 3 March 2020 marks Öcalan's last direct contact with his family. Also, in 24 years, he communicated with the outside world via telephone on only two occasions (on 27 April 2020 and 25 March 2021). During the last phone call on 25 March 2021, the connection was lost after only two minutes and could not be restored. Öcalan has not been heard from since.

### **Incommunicado detention**

The report by Asrın stated that their clients' situation was described as a form of "incommunicado" detention by the CPT in its report of 5 August 2020 (paras. 48 and 49). The CPT emphasized that such a state of affairs was unacceptable, urging the Turkish authorities to end it as soon as possible. "Incommunicado" detention means that the detainee or convict is completely prevented from any contact with the outside world and therefore cannot communicate with anyone, including his/her family, friends, and lawyers.

The "incommunicado" detention continued without interruption in 2022 despite lawyers' weekly applications to the authorities in which they requested for the families and lawyers to be allowed to visit the prison. From 25 March 2021, the last date of contact with İmralı, until the end of 2022, a total of 238 applications for lawyer visits and another 79 applications for family/guardian visits were made. These applications were left without any response. Likewise, lawyers did not receive any letters, telegrams, or faxes from their clients during this period; nor was there any contact via phone.

### **Restrictions through fabricated decisions**

"After we applied to different international mechanisms, we learned from the government's responses that our clients' right to communicate via phone had been restricted for six months by decisions of the prison's Management and Supervisory Board dated 18 October 2021, 30 March 2022, 9 May 2022 and 9 June 2022, respectively. These restriction orders were not communicated to the lawyers; the procedures were carried out secretly, bypassing the lawyers. Thus, it was understood that our clients' right to communicate via phone is subject to periodic restrictions through fabricated decisions that are issued once every six months.

Moreover, we have not received any response to the numerous letters sent to our clients at regular intervals throughout the year. It is not known whether these letters were delivered to their addressees at all. In turn, we have also not received any letters, telegrams or faxes written by our clients in 2022.

In addition, the de facto and unlawful bans on family and lawyer visits that have been in place for many years have been maintained systematically and without cease so that not a single family or lawyer visit could take place in 2022. In this respect, 2022 was marked by the absolute impossibility of establishing any contact with our clients in İmralı Island Prison."

## You can watch speeches for the Network for an Alternative Quest Conference IV, 7-9 April 2023, Hamburg: “We want our World Back – Resist, Reclaim, and Build”

Hatun Ayçık <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1LPO2r4DII>

Leyla Kaya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF-4aTO1KM5>

Luise Dechow <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2LYT3SkjXk>

Reimar Heider <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uerqsbmYFg>

James Kelman [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fI8FzRD5\\_jg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fI8FzRD5_jg)

Here's all the speeches from Session 1:

1-1 Derya Akyol / Necmettin Türk [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPRV\\_Y6yruA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPRV_Y6yruA)

1-2 Harriet Friedman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKE6lQVBXII>

1-3 Azra Talat Sayeed <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LN4KFknboM>

1-4 Sina Reisch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mH0aGR39vec>

1-5 Davide Grasso <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL4K79V01Gc>

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## Prisons in Turkey

### Journalist Çelik released

ANF | AMED | 25 MAY 2023

Mezopotamya Agency (MA) journalist Ferhat Çelik went to the police station in the Huzurevleri Mahallesi of the Peyas (Kayapınar) district on Wednesday to give his statement as part of the investigation carried out by the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office and was taken into custody. Çelik was transferred to the Diyarbakır Courthouse after his statement at the police station.

On Thursday, he was referred to the courthouse with a request for judicial control. He was released with a prohibition on traveling abroad.

As part of the same investigation, 191 people were detained in house raids in 21 cities on 25 April, and more than 50 people, including journalists and lawyers, were arrested.

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## Son of seriously ill prisoner Mehmet Emin Özkan released from jail

ANF | AMED | 26 MAY 2023

Ahmet Özkan, the son of seriously ill prisoner Mehmet Emin Özkan (83), was in Diyarbakır High Security Prison No. 1 together with his father for 5 years. He was released after 12 years and 8 months. Özkan, who was detained in Amed in 2011, was arrested on the charge of “being a member of a terrorist organization” and was sentenced to 13 years and 8 months in prison. Özkan, whose sentence was increased by 3 years and 2 months on the grounds of breaking the camera in the ward while he was imprisoned in İskenderun F Type Closed Prison, was released from prison on Thursday after serving a sentence of 16 years and 10 months.

Özkan family, lawyers from the Lawyers Association for Freedom (ÖHD) Amed Branch, and members of the Association for Assistance and Solidarity with Detainees and Convict Families (TUHAY-DER) gathered in front of the prison gate waiting for Özkan to be released. Özkan, who was eventually released in the evening, was greeted with applause and flowers.

Özkan said: “My father is seriously ill. He needs to be released from prison. However, there is a hostile approach that has prevented him from being released so far. My father is not the only ill prisoner. We need to stand up for all ill prisoners.”

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## Military aggression and occupation

### Turkish drone targets house in Shengal

ANF | SHENGAL | 23 MAY 2023

An armed unmanned aerial vehicle (SIHA) belonging to the Turkish army hit a house in the village of Xelef in Shengal's Barê district in the morning hours.

Details of the attack could not be obtained.

The Yazidi town of Shengal (Sinjar), which was subjected to genocide by ISIS mercenaries on August 3, 2014, was liberated on November 13, 2015, after months of resistance led by HPG guerrillas and Shengal Resistance Units (YBŞ). The people of Shengal formed their self-defence and self-government as the greatest response to further massacres and betrayal in Shengal.

Having declared its Democratic Autonomous Administration, Shengal became the target of both the Turkish state and South Kurdistan's ruling party, KDP. While armed groups affiliated with the KDP and

the Turkish army launched attacks in 2017, the central Iraqi government also resorted to various methods to eliminate the autonomy in Shengal.

The Turkish state has recently taken action for further massacres in Shengal. YBŞ commanders Pîr Çeko and Agir Cefri were killed on February 27, and Yazidi Public Security Executive Member Şêrzad Şemo Kasım was killed on March 1 by Turkish air strikes. These attacks by the Turkish state took place right after an operation by the YBŞ and Shengal Asayish against MIT (Turkish intelligence service) agents deployed to Shengal by the KDP. Two MIT agents, named Seed Casim Mirad and Selah Berces were captured during the operations of the Shengal security forces, which were carried out on February 24 and dubbed “Revenge Operations”.

The attacks of KDP-affiliated mercenaries and Turkish state forces against Shengal have continued uninterruptedly since 2017.



## YBŞ: Turkish attack in Shengal is a continuation of Yazidi genocide

ANF | SHENGAL | 23 MAY 2023

The Shengal Resistance Units (YBŞ) released a statement on the Turkish drone attack that targeted a guest-house of the YBŞ on Tuesday.

According to the statement, Said Êşur from Khanasor was killed in the attack, which also left a guest injured.

“This attack reveals the goal of the invading Turkish state. It is not the first attack directed against the Yazidi people. It is a continuation of the Yazidi genocide.”

### Shengal under attack since 2017

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## YJA Star announces martyr of guerrilla commander Leyla Sorxwîn in Besta

ANF | BEHDINAN | 24 MAY 2023

The Free Women’s Troops (YJA Star) announced the loss of commander Leyla Sorxwîn. According to the statement released by the central headquarters of YJA Star on Wednesday, Leyla Sorxwîn was martyred in battle against the Turkish army in the northern Kurdish region of Besta on 22-23 January. During the two-day clashes in the course of a broad military operation in the province of Şırnak, seven members of a YJA-Star unit fell as martyrs.

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## HPG reports 26 Turkish attacks on guerrilla areas

ANF | BEHDINAN | 24 MAY 2023

The Press Office of the People’s Defense Forces (HPG) released a statement providing information about the war in Kurdistan territory.

According to the HPG statement on Wednesday, the Turkish army carried out 7 airstrikes and 19 attacks with howitzers, mortars and tanks in the guerrilla-held Medya Defence Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

In the region of Zap, Turkish troops attacked the Girê FM Resistance Area on May 22, facing a response from the guerrillas in self-defense.

On the same day, the Turkish army attacked the guerrilla forces in Sida. Fighters of YJA Star (Free Women's Troops) carried out a sabotage operation in response to the attack, killing one of the invaders and injuring another.

On May 23, guerrillas responded to another attack on their positions in Sida.

On the other hand, HPG reported 7 airstrikes directed against the areas of Goşînê in Xakurke; Girê Çarçêl and Girê Amediyê in Metina; Girê Bahar and Girê Cûdî in Zap on May 21, 22 and 23.

During the course of the mentioned days, the areas of Girê Şehîd Piling and Girê Hakkarî in Metina, and the areas of Girê Cûdî, Girê Bahar, Çemço and Sîda in Zap were targeted by 19 attacks with howitzers, mortars and tanks.

On May 23, the invading forces continued to try to demolish the guerrilla positions at Girê FM with construction machinery.

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## Turkish bombardments cause damage to civilian settlements in South Kurdistan

ANF | BEHDINAN | 25 MAY 2023

Seeking to depopulate the region, the Turkish army has been targeting civilian settlements in South Kurdistan. Reporting from the ground, ANF correspondent Dilara Nurhaq exposes the results of Turkish bombings in the Garê area and the damage done to the environment.

Many roads leading to the villages in the region were severely damaged in an area targeted by repeated bombings by the Turkish army. Many villages in the region from Duhok to Amadiya have been cut off from each other due to the Turkish bombardments. Villagers cannot move in the area to take care of their gardens and fields in the spring months.

Locals regard the attacks in and around Garê as a special policy targeting the people of South Kurdistan. KDP officials collaborating with the invading Turkish state in the region threatened villagers several times to evacuate the area. When the threats failed, attacks by the Turkish state escalated.

Local people say that the lack of response by the local authorities paved the way for the attacks of the Turkish state.

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## Damascus continues to impose a heavy embargo on Şêxmeqşûd and Eşrefiye

ANF | ALEPPO | 26 MAY 2023

Many areas have been damaged, as well as the cutting of diesel. The lack of important materials creates major problems.

Due to the embargo imposed by the Damascus government on the neighbourhoods of Şêxmeqşûd and Eşrefiye, the People's Municipality is prevented from carrying out its work in many areas.

In addition to the great damage to the service area because of the lack of diesel, the ban on the passage of equipment parts is also a major obstacle.

People's Municipality Labor Department Executive member Mistefa Şahin said that they are experiencing great difficulties due to the embargo.

Providing information on the municipality's reason for suspending service activities, Şahin told ANHA that the work stopped because a lot of equipment needed to be replaced but was not allowed to enter the neighbourhoods.

Şahin added: "Since the embargo has become heavier, we have been facing many difficulties and problems. The service industry has suffered because the vehicles are old and need replacing. But the Damascus government does not allow the parts to come into the neighbourhoods."

Şahin said that many projects propose by the municipality were not realized as planned because of the lack of diesel.

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## SDF captures two Turkish occupation intelligence agents

ANF | 26 MAY 2023

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) confirmed in a statement that they captured two men working for Turkish intelligence.

The statement said: "In line with their military and security tasks to combat ISIS terrorist cells and dismantle the Turkish occupation networks in the regions of Northern and Eastern Syria, our SDF special units have apprehended two individuals who were acting as agents for Turkish occupation intelligence. These agents were actively involved in gathering information about the whereabouts of security and military forces and the facilities belonging to the Autonomous Administration. Their activities also extended

to pinpointing commanders within our forces, and they were receiving financial compensation in exchange for their involvement in acquiring such information.”

The statement added: “During the interrogations conducted with the two mercenaries, they admitted to their complicity in transmitting information and coordinates of military sites belonging to the SDF military councils in Tal Tamir, Zarkan, Amuda, and Al-Darbasiya. These sites have been targeted by Turkish occupation forces in recent times, resulting in the unfortunate loss of several brave fighters. Additionally, the mercenaries have confessed to relaying details concerning the movements of our force’s commanders, including Rezan Clu, the co-president of the Martyrs’ Families Foundation, who was subjected to an assassination attempt last year by a Turkish UAV.”

The statement said: “The captured mercenary operative, Elias Muhammad Al-Rahil, born in Al-Darbasiya in 1997, has confessed to engaging in multiple acts of espionage. He admitted to transmitting photographs and coordinates of numerous military and service sites in Zarkan, Amuda, and Al-Darbasiya to the Turkish occupation forces. Upon verification, it was discovered that much of the provided information and coordinates were subsequently targeted by aerial and artillery bombardments during recent periods. Furthermore, the agent also admitted his involvement in identifying leaders of the SDF and their movements, including Rezan Clu, who survived the attack carried out by a Turkish UAV in the previous year. The captured mercenary operative, Elias Al-Rahil, has admitted to traveling to Turkey and meeting with Turkish intelligence agents. During these encounters, he offered his services in exchange for money.”

The statement added that “the other mercenary agent, Hamid Khalil Al-Ahmad, born in Kharza, Amuda, in 1998, confessed to having direct contact with a member of Turkish intelligence. He admitted to transmitting information concerning over twenty military, security, and service sites in Zarkan, Amuda, and Al-Darbasiya. One of these sites, located in the village of Kharza, was subjected to aerial bombardment by Turkish forces, resulting in the unfortunate loss of two fighters from the Self-Defense Forces.

Following the conclusion of the investigations, both agents were handed over to the appropriate judicial institutions for further legal proceedings.”



## MSD: Arab-Syria normalization will be a positive step if it seeks to end the Syrian crisis

ANF | SHEHBA | 26 MAY 2023

Afrin and Shehba Communications Offices of the Syrian Democratic Council (MSD) held a panel in the Serdem Camp in the Ehdas district of Shehba Canton.

Independent politicians, representatives of political parties, members of non-governmental organizations in the cantons of Aleppo, Afrin and Shehba attended the panel.

A council consisting of MSD Executive Council Co-Chair Hesên Mihemed Elî and MSD Afrin and Aleppo Co-Chair Bêrîvan Elî was elected to administer the panel.

Mihemed Elî addressed the political developments in the world, the worsening economy, the struggle for power among the great powers, the Ukraine war, the alliances between Russia, China and Iran, and the plans of the USA over the region.

### **‘Agreements seek to destroy the Autonomous Administration’**

Mihemed Elî also addressed the recent normalization between the Damascus government and the Arab world, Syria's participation in the Arab Summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia after a 12-year hiatus, the Turkish elections and Erdogan's efforts to normalize relations with the Damascus government. He said: “What is happening on the ground is not what it looks like on the table. The purpose of the agreements made at the table is to destroy the Autonomous Administration.”

He remarked that they sought to ensure security, peace, to end the conflict and to bring the country out of 12 years of darkness.”

Mihemed Elî added: “If the normalization with the Damascus government is an attempt to find a general solution and to end the crisis, it will be positive.”

At the end of the panel, the participants shared their opinions on the content of the panel.

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# The Maxmur Refugee Camp

## Reactions to siege attempt in Maxmur increase

ANF | 22 MAY 2023

The attempts by the Iraqi Army to enter the Martyr Rustem Cûdî Refugee Camp in Maxmur with weapons and armored vehicles and to surround it with wire fences, were frustrated by the resistance of the people of the camp.

The HDP Kurdistan Region Representative Office in Hewler (Erbil) made a statement regarding the siege of Maxmur Camp. The HDP Kurdistan Region Representative co-chair Hikmet Hatip read the statement.

Hatip pointed out that Maxmur Camp is a camp where refugees from Bakur Kurdistan live under the control of the United Nations and said: “Attacks against the residents of Maxmur Camp have been going on for years. This situation causes unrest among citizens. That is why we condemn the siege of the camp.”

## Attempt to build an open prison

Pointing out that the purpose of the Iraqi army's attacks on Maxmur Camp, which has been deprived of health, education and many other vital rights for years, was to create an open prison, Hatip said: "This is an inhuman attitude. We condemn this attack in the strongest terms. We stand by the people of Maxmur. The United Nations must fulfil its responsibilities. The Iraqi army must withdraw from Maxmur."

## Call for support for the people of Maxmur

Another condemnation came from the Qamishlo Canton Amude Assembly. Assembly member Hena Xalid said in a statement: "The enemies of the Kurdish people continue to kill, displace and violate the rights of Kurds throughout history. Thousands of people from North (Bakur) Kurdistan were displaced and went to live in Maxmur Camp. Despite the difficult geography of the region and the unsuitable conditions for life, the people of Bakur Kurdistan were able to create life from death. Attacks against them have continued since the day they settled in the camp. Although the camp is under UN supervision, the Iraqi army has surrounded it since Saturday. The siege against them is also against the right to protection of the refugees. The Iraqi government should not be deceived by the policies of the Turkish government. In this difficult time, our people in Maxmur Camp are besieged, hostile policies are implemented against our people in Shengal, and the Semalka Border Gate is closed. These policies are interrelated. We call on our people in Bashur Kurdistan to support their brothers in Maxmur. We also call on the UN and the Iraqi government to protect the rights of refugees."

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## People in Maxmur carry out vigil against the Iraqi army's attempt to besiege the camp

ANF | MAXMUR | 22 MAY 2023

Young and old people in Maxmur continue their resistance against the Iraqi army's attempts to turn the Martyr Rustem Camp in Maxmur into a concentration camp by enclosing it with wire fences.

Children, young people, women, the elderly from 7 to 70, are all carrying out a vigil to resist the violence and to demand that the Iraqi state withdraw its army.

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## Resistance of Maxmur people enters third day

AWYER BOTAN | MAXMUR | 22 MAY 2023

On the morning of May 20, the Iraqi army, supported by a large number of police, took action to surround the Maxmur refugee camp with barbed wire and towers. The residents of the camp opposed the blockade and resisted the Iraqi forces.

### No entrance to the camp

All the entrances and exits of the camp, where about 12 thousand refugees reside, have been closed by the Iraqi army. The blockade is jeopardizing the lives of the residents of the camp where there are many seriously ill refugees.

The Maxmur camp has already been under a strict embargo by the KDP since July 17, 2019. The residents of the camp are not allowed to enter the cities of South Kurdistan and to provide basic needs from outside. Numerous people have already lost their lives due to the embargo.

The resistance against the Iraqi army blockade has entered its third day. The residents of the camp are standing guard in tents and say that they will not leave until the Iraqi forces withdraw.

Fatma Cizîrî, one of the residents standing guard, said: “The Iraqi state is persecuting us. We are already surrounded by ditches, and now they want to surround the camp with barbed wire.”

### We are already in open prison

Cizîrî added: “If they stay here, we will stay, too. We live here as refugees. What do they want from us? We are already in an open prison. What else do they want? We will resist until the last drop of our blood.”

A young woman named Jiyan Posat said: “They attacked from five directions. Against this, the camp residents are positioned at every point where the Iraqi forces are. There is outstanding resistance. Young people and mothers are resisting.”

### Call for solidarity

Addressing the international community and the Kurdish people, Posat stated: “We are resisting. You need to support us. In particular, our people in Bashur (South Kurdistan), young people, the United Nations and our people in Europe should support us. Without strong solidarity, the Iraqi state will not stop.”

Posat emphasized that they were not in favour of conflict and two of the camp residents were injured by Iraqi forces. She said: “We do not want to be surrounded by barbed wire. The Iraqi state claims that the people demand it. But the people are here, and they don't want it.”

## Iraq should stop air strikes if they want to protect us

Posat noted that they have been protecting themselves for the last 30 years. She concluded: “They claim that they want to protect us. We don’t need their protection. If they want to protect us, they should stop the air strikes first.”



## KCK: Iraq must end the siege in Maxmur and resolve problems through dialogue

ANF | BEHDINAN | 22 MAY 2023

The Co|Presidency of the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) Executive Council released a statement calling for support for the rightful stance of the patriotic people of Maxmur which the Iraqi army has been trying to isolate by surrounding the refugee camp with barbed wire and towers.

The KCK statement reads as follows:

“The Iraqi state has recently taken an attitude leading to the besieging of the Maxmur refugee camp. This situation has led to tensions in the camp. The tensions between the people of the camp and the forces of the Iraqi state apparently still continue and two patriots from the camp were wounded in the brawl that broke out. First of all, we would like to wish a speedy recovery for the two wounded patriots. The Iraqi state must end the siege against the Maxmur refugee camp and put an end to these tensions. The Iraqi state should focus on solving the existing problems through dialog, not through military force, siege and pressure. The people living in the Maxmur refugee camp do not have any problems with the Iraqi state. And the Iraqi state has no problem that it cannot solve with the refugees living in the camp.

The people living in Maxmur camp have the status of political refugees and should be treated accordingly. The allegations that the Turkish state has been making about the Maxmur refugee camp are completely baseless. Maxmur camp is a civilian camp. The people living there had to leave their lands due to the persecution of the Turkish state and consequently settled in Iraq. Until today, they have faced thousands of difficulties, but based on great will and solidarity, they have struggled against the difficulties and tried to hold on to life. For decades, the Maxmur refugee camp has had an official status under the UN laws concerning refugees. Therefore, Maxmur refugee camp is legally under the protection of the UN. This position and status of Maxmur camp continues to this day. Therefore, it is within the scope of the UN laws on refugees. As a requirement of these laws, the Iraqi state also has responsibilities towards the Maxmur refugee camp. Because the Iraqi state is a member of the UN and is responsible for implementing UN law. The responsibility of the Iraqi state is to ensure the security of life and property of the refugees in accordance with UN law and to support the refugees on basic humanitarian issues. The Iraqi state has acted according to this responsibility, albeit at a minimum level, and there have been no problems between the Iraqi state and the Maxmur refugee camp until today.

However, in recent years, as a result of the increasing pressure from the Turkish state, both the UN and the Iraqi state have failed to uphold their responsibilities. Although the Maxmur refugee camp is under the protection of the UN, the Iraqi UN representation does not recognize its responsibility and does not take any stance against the attacks of the Turkish state on the camp. Tens of people from the camp have been killed and wounded as a result of the attacks of the Turkish state. However, by not taking a stance against this, the Iraqi UN representation both fails to do its duty and legitimizes the attacks of the Turkish state. The Iraqi state, on the other hand, has supported the Turkish state's plan to destroy the Maxmur refugee camp with its recent attitude. The Iraqi state should change this negative attitude and act according to its responsibility, not according to the pressure of the Turkish state. The claim that the Maxmur refugee camp is a military camp and that military activities are being carried out there is a fabrication of the Turkish state and has no truth to it. The Turkish state is trying to justify and legitimize the attacks against the Maxmur camp with such baseless allegations.

The Iraqi state should not act according to these baseless allegations. It should focus on solving the problems through dialog, talks and discussions with the people of the camp. We believe that the existing problems will be solved through dialog. We hope that an approach within this framework will be taken as a basis and that the problems will thus be solved. On the other hand, we call on the international organizations, especially the UN, to act responsibly and to uphold their responsibilities against the impositions of the Turkish state. The Iraqi state and the UN must act responsibly in order to resolve the problems related to the Maxmur refugee camp without causing tensions and conflict. International official institutions and democratic NGOs should also be sensitive and make efforts to resolve the problems related to the Maxmur camp, which has refugee status according to UN law, through dialogue.

The people and democratic forces of Kurdistan must support the rightful stance of the patriotic people of Maxmur, who have not given way to any provocations, and must not leave the people of the camp alone. The solidarity of the patriotic people of Kurdistan and sensitive democratic groups with the Maxmur camp is very important.”

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## South Kurdistan parties urge the Iraqi government to stop the blockade of Maxmur

ANF | 22 MAY 2023

The Kurdistan Democratic People's Party, the Kurdistan Labour Party and the Kurdistan Communist Party, which came together under the banner of the Kurdistan Left Parties' Council, reacted to the Iraqi blockade of the Maxmur refugee camp.

The left-wing parties condemned the blockade of the camp by Iraqi military forces seeking to surround it with barbed wire and towers.

“For several days, the Iraqi army has been trying to enter the camp and take it under its control,” said the parties and noted that the camp was under the protection of the United Nations, but was nevertheless bombed dozens of times by the Turkish state, killing many women, elderly and children.

Pointing out that ISIS remnants continued to threaten the camp, the parties defined the Iraqi government's attempt as “illegal”.

The three parties recalled the Turkish state's threats against the camp, warning that “control of the camp by the Iraqi army would further increase the danger”.

Appealing to all parties involved, the three parties demanded an end to the efforts to control the camp and a respect for the rights and laws of refugees.

The left-wing parties also called on the United Nations to fulfil its responsibility to ensure the security of the camp.



## Maxmur People's Assembly calls for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops: “We are ready for dialogue”

ANF | MAXMUR | 22 MAY 2023

On the third day of the resistance in the Maxmur refugee camp in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq), Maxmur Democratic People's Assembly Co-Chair Yusif Kara called on all democratic forces to put pressure on the Iraqi government.

### ‘Barbed wire is an insult and isolation’

Kara remarked that the Iraqi government had long been seeking to surround the camp with barbed wire in cooperation with the Barzani family and Turkey, which the people of Maxmur have never accepted. “We consider it an insult and isolation. We have said it openly, but they are insisting.”

Talking about the Iraqi army's mobilization for the blockade launched on May 20, Kara said: “They wanted to attack with the support of the police and armoured vehicles. They sent a delegation, whom we met, revealing our stance once again. However, they did not listen and insisted on their decision.”

Kara noted that this attitude of the Iraqi government was against United Nations laws and hospitality, adding that the blockade decision was clearly made in line with the policies of the fascist Turkish state.

### **‘Maxmur residents will not accept the blockade’**

Kara spoke about the resistance of the camp residents, stating: “We do not accept this blockade in any way. We have been in exile for 30 years. They cannot impose this on us. We want to live with dignity and honour. We escaped from the persecution of a fascist enemy and became refugees in Iraqi land, where we have been living for 30 years. After 30 years of persecution, the residents of Maxmur will not accept the isolation and imposition of an open prison.”

Appealing to the international democratic public opinion, especially the United Nations, the people of Kurdistan and the people of Iraq, Kara said: “The Iraqi people are very hospitable. They should reject the practices imposed on them by the traitors and the fascist Turkish state.”

### **‘Withdraw your forces, we are ready for dialogue’**

Kara concluded: “We once again call on the Iraqi government to abandon its inhumane attitude which promotes Turkey’s interests on the eve of the 28 May election. For 30 years, we have not done harm to them (Iraqi people), nor have they done any harm to us. Abandon this attitude against us. Withdraw your forces. Then we will be ready for negotiations with Iraqi government officials and civilian institutions.”

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## **Amid increased military activity, Iraqi army digs trenches around Maxmur Refugee Camp**

ANF | MAXMUR | 22 MAY 2023

On the morning of May 20, Iraqi troops, supported by a large number of police, took action to surround the Maxmur refugee camp with barbed wire and towers. The residents of the camp have been resisting the Iraqi forces since their action seeking to turn the camp into an open prison.

Military activity around the camp increased on the third day of the camp residents’ resistance.

According to reports from the ground, the road of Baqirte town leading to the camp has been closed to traffic.

Reports are coming through of military reinforcement to the camp, around which Iraqi troops have started digging trenches with earth diggers.

All the entrances and exits of the camp, where about 12 thousand refugees reside, have been closed by the Iraqi army. The blockade is jeopardizing the lives of the residents of the camp where there are many seriously ill refugees.

The Maxmur camp has already been under a strict embargo by the KDP since July 17, 2019. The residents of the camp are not allowed to enter the cities of South Kurdistan and to provide basic needs from outside. Numerous people have already lost their lives due to the embargo.

In recent years, similar attempts to fence the camp in with barbed wire have failed due to the resistance of the people. Maxmur Camp is located about 60 kilometres southwest of Hewlêr (Erbil), the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. More than 12,000 people live in the camp. Most of them were forced to leave their villages in Northern Kurdistan in the 1990s due to the repression of the Turkish state and the scorched-earth policy. After an odyssey of several years and stays in various camps, they founded the Maxmur Camp on the edge of the desert in 1998. The camp population thus forms the largest Kurdish refugee community worldwide.

The grassroots-democratically organised and self-governing camp is a thorn in Turkey's side. In recent years, there have been repeated air strikes on Maxmur, most recently in August 2022, when a father of six was killed by a drone. In an air strike three months earlier, a civilian was fatally injured by the Turkish army. These war crimes have remained without consequences to this day.

Officially, Maxmur is under the protection of the UNHCR, but in practice the UN is only nominally present. The organisation left the camp during the attacks by ISIS in 2014 and did not return afterwards.

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## Delegation of mothers from Maxmur meets Iraqi authorities

ANF | MAXMUR | 22 MAY 2023

While the Iraqi Army was blocking the roads, a delegation of mothers from Maxmur, who wanted the problem to be resolved through dialogue, met with the Iraqi authorities.

The Iraqi state has been trying to surround the Martyr Rustem Cûdî Camp with its army since 20 May but was met by the resistance of the people from the first moment. A delegation of mothers of Maxmur, who wanted the problem to be solved through dialogue, held a meeting with the Iraqi forces. The mothers conveyed to the authorities that they did not accept the camp being turned into a concentration camp.

The Iraqi army, which continued its siege attempt, started to surround the roads with fences. The people, on the other hand, did not leave the area for three days. Resistance continues.

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## Resistance of Maxmur people opens door to negotiation

ANF | MAXMUR | 23 MAY 2023

The people have been resisting for three days against the Iraqi army's attempt to besiege the Martyr Rustem Cudi Refugee Camp in Maxmur. On Monday night, a delegation of Maxmur people shared the results of their meeting with the Iraqi authorities.

Maxmur Democratic People's Assembly co-chair Filiz Budak said: "Dear resisting people. The name of the Kurdish people is resistance and this includes the people of Maxmur.

We have been resisting here for three days. We have meetings, of course, but we cannot say that everything is concluded. We have brought the government to the negotiation table.

On the first day, they told us that they would never have dialogue. The three-day resistance of the people and society brought them to that table. They wanted to achieve their aim but could not. They came and sat at the table. They stopped digging trenches. We conveyed our demands to them. We will never accept the erection of towers, fences or ditches. Some of our requests were accepted. Now the decision to dig a trench is on the agenda. For this reason, they have stopped it for now, and will forward it to Baghdad with our other requests. We will have another meeting. The result will be known today.

We know very well that it was the power of the people that brought the government to this level.

Our vigil will continue. They will also wait in the ditches. Long live our organized people, long live our people who re-created themselves with the thought and philosophy of Rêber Apo!"

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## Young people in Shengal march against attacks targeting Maxmur camp

ANF | SHENGAL | 23 MAY 2023

The Shengal Young Women's Union (YCJŞ) held a march with the slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi, ser bixe, azadi" to condemn the isolation against Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan and the attacks on Maxmur.

Avesta Êzidî made the statement on behalf of young people and said that every place where Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan developed his ideas is the target of the invaders.

Avesta said that "the invading Turkish state continues its attacks against Shengal and Maxmur. They want to surround Maxmur Camp with wire fences. If this situation continues, we will join the resistance of the

people of Maxmur. We will never allow the enemy to carry out his dirty plans against our people. Because the attacks on Maxmur and Shengal are not separate from each other.”

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## Mothers in Maxmur reiterate their demand for dialogue

ANF | MAXMUR | 23 MAY 2023

Despite opposition from the Kurdish refugee community, the Iraqi army has begun preparations for fencing in the Maxmur Camp in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). Heavy construction machinery is being used to dig trenches for fence posts along the roads of the refugee camp. In the meantime, a delegation of mothers has sought talks with the Iraqi forces. The women reiterated their rejection of the fencing of the camp with barbed wire ordered by Baghdad over the heads of Maxmur’s residents and emphasised their demand for dialogue with the Iraqi government.

“We condemn any ultimatums and continue to insist on starting a talk to resolve the problem,” said a spokesperson for the Peace Mothers Initiative. “We want the will of the people of Maxmur to be respected and invite government actors to engage in a goodwill dialogue to find a solution.” The residents of the self-managed camp are unwilling to have their homes turned into open prisons and to live in a militarised environment, she said. “But our appeals remain unheard,” the initiative stated.

Maxmur Camp near the town of the same name is located southwest of Hewlêr (Erbil), the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The region is one of the disputed areas of the country between the Kurdish autonomous government and the central government in Baghdad. The camp houses about 12,000 people and consists mainly of Kurds who were forcibly displaced from their villages in the Botan region in North Kurdistan by the Turkish state in the early 1990s.

Since Saturday, Maxmur has been besieged by Iraqi military and police units. In addition to the planned fencing, the deployment of security forces from Baghdad, the closure of all entrances and exits except for the main access, the installation of military concrete barriers on the access road and the erection of observation towers in the surrounding area are also intended to be enforced. The population is putting up collective resistance to the plan. On Saturday, two people from Maxmur were injured as the Iraqi army used firearms against the camp population. Residential houses were also hit by bullets.

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## Seeking to dismantle Maxmur camp, Turkey threatens Iraq with 'water war'

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 23 MAY 2023

In a statement concerning the Iraqi blockade of the Maxmur refugee camp, Tevgera Azadî (Freedom Movement) said that the Turkish state threatened Iraq with "water war".

The press statement was made in front of the Iraq Office in Sulaymaniyah to the accompaniment of political parties and activists.

The statement noted that the Iraqi army went into action to surround the Maxmur refugee camp with barbed wire on May 20 and injured two camp residents during the ensuing crackdown.

### Camp residents cannot enjoy refugee rights

Recalling that the people of Maxmur had to migrate from North Kurdistan 29 years ago due to persecution and attacks they suffered at the hands of the Turkish state, the statement said: "The governments of the Kurdistan Region and Iraq are constantly cracking down on this camp in an unlawful way. The residents of the camp cannot enjoy refugee rights."

Tevgera Azadî noted that the Turkish state has carried out airstrikes on the camp dozens of times so far, which killed or injured numerous people. It added: "The duty of the regional and central governments is to protect the camp residents and prevent these attacks."

### Turkey threatened Iraq with 'water war'

According to the statement, during the talks held in the last three days, Iraqi officials told the camp administrators that Turkey had threatened to launch a water war against Iraq if the camp was not dismantled.

### They want to dismantle camp

"They want to isolate the camp with barbed wire and towers at Turkey's request. They want to implement all these plans in cooperation with the KDP, Turkey and Iraq and to dismantle the camp over time."

Tevgera Azadî noted that the refugees in the Maxmur camp had been living there for 29 years. It emphasized that although the Iraqi and regional governments checked every single house in the camp dozens of times, they did not find any single illegal activity.

### KDP blockaded the camp instead of serving its residents

"Instead of serving the camp residents, the KDP has closed their roads for 4 years. They don't even allow pregnant women to go to Hewlêr and Sulaymaniyah hospitals. As the Kurdistan Community Freedom

Movement, we condemn the Iraqi government. The people of Maxmur demand that the government resolve the issues through political and international means,” stated Tevgera Azadî.

A statement was made afterwards on behalf of the Kurdistan Democratic People's Party, the Workers' Party and the Kurdistan Communist Party.

The statement called on the central Baghdad government and all related circles to stop efforts to take control of the camp. The three left-wing parties called on the United Nations to fulfil its duty to protect the camp.

### **KNK: Kurdistan under the threat of a major invasion**

On behalf of the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK), Salar Mehmudi, appealed to all freedom supporters and friends of humanity, saying: “The Kurdistan region is under the threat of a major invasion. Together with its partners in Iraq, the Turkish state is trying to stifle pro-freedom groups.”

Mehmudi called on the Iraqi state to treat the Maxmur camp in accordance with international law: “Attacking and blockading a refugee camp under UN protection indicates an enormous danger directed against humanity and Kurdistan.”

### **Omar: Recent escalation concerns safety and water issues**

Iraqi Parliament Immigration and Migrants Committee Member Soran Omar said: “We have already been working on this issue. We have been in dialogue with the relevant parties about Maxmur's problems for some time. What is happening in Maxmur is caused by the joint plan of Iraq and Turkey. The recent escalation concerns security and water issues.”

Omar pointed out that the crackdown on the camp was politically motivated, stemming from Turkey's pressures on Iraq. He said: “Civilians, women and children reside in this camp, which cannot be put under pressure at Turkey's request. We will do our best.”

### **Maxmur is a national issue**

Drawing attention to the drone attacks by the Turkish state, Omar said: “We will do whatever it takes for the Maxmur camp, because it is a national issue. All parliamentarians in Baghdad must raise their voices.”

## Arab Council of Shengal condemns Turkish attack, calls on Iraq to defend its sovereignty

ANF | SHENGAL | 23 MAY 2023

An armed drone of the Turkish state bombed a house in the Shengal region early this morning. The attack occurred in the village of Xelef, in Barê hamlet near Khanasor (Xanesor). According to information from the region, the house was destroyed, and no people were killed. The bombed house was inspected by Iraqi military officials, but no official statement was made.

In a statement issued at the site, the Arab Council of Shengal condemned the attack and called on the Iraqi state to defend its territorial sovereignty.

The Arab Council of Shengal said: "This place bombed by the Turkish state is a civilian residential area in a village near Khanasor. As all can testify, families are being attacked. This is preventing the return of displaced people. It is a political issue involving several political parties. As the people of Shengal, with its Arab, Kurdish, Yazidi and other populations, we live like one family on this land. We have created a small Iraq on the soil of Shengal and hope that Iraq will take Shengal as an example.

As Arab people, we demand that international institutions and leaders raise their voices against these attacks. The Turkish state has bombed Shengal and its people several times and nobody says anything about it. We do not consider these attacks as independent from the 74th genocide against the Yazidi community. We demand again from the Iraqi state to close its airspace to Turkey. As Arabs, we condemn this attack on the Yazidi people and appeal to the Iraqi state to defend its sovereignty."

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## Maxmur co-chair Kara: Negotiations will continue and so will the resistance

ANF | MAXMUR | 24 MAY 2023

A delegation from Camp Maxmûr met with representatives of the UN and the Iraqi government on Tuesday. During the conversation, the delegation conveyed the demands of the population of the camp of refugees from Northern Kurdistan.

Following the talk, Yusif Kara, co-chair of the People's Council of Maxmur, made a brief statement to the crowd who have been holding a vigil to resist the military siege since Saturday.

Kara said that the will and resistance of the population and the Kurdish public has made the siege plan fail for the time being. "We stopped them for the moment, but they are sticking to their plan and saying they

will do it. At the moment there is no telling what will happen now and what they will do. If they want to continue digging trenches around the camp, we will continue our resistance as well as talks. If anything comes up, we'll let you know.”

Regarding the resistance of the people of Maxmur, Kara said: “This camp has paid a heavy price and is known worldwide for its resistance and attitude. This is an honor for the people of Maxmur, it is a wonderful thing.”



## Maxmur resistance enters 5th day

ANF | MAXMUR | 24 MAY 2023

The Iraqi army has been trying to surround Maxmur with wire fences and towers since 20 May.

The people of the camp resisted the attempt from the beginning and stopped the Iraqi forces who came to the area with armoured vehicles. For five days, people have been holding a vigil to protect the camp.

Opposite the points where the Iraqi forces are stationed, the people have established a barrier with their own bodies.

Everyone from 7 to 70 takes part in the resistance. In the evenings, mothers' laments rise from the resistance points.

### UN representative came after 9 years

Negotiations between the people of Maxmur and the relevant parties continue. For the first time since the ISIS attack in 2014, UN representatives met with a camp delegation. During the meeting, the people of Maxmur presented a file containing their demands.

The Iraqi army continues to insist on the siege but the resistance continues.

Tevgera Azadi, who made a statement in front of the Iraqi Office in Sulaymaniyah on 23 May, demanded the implementation of refugee law in accordance with international law.

Tevgera Azadî said that the Turkish state put pressure on Baghdad to dismantle the camp and threatened the country with a “water war”.

### 4 years of embargo

The closure of the camp, where around 12 thousand refugees live, poses a serious danger to the lives of people, because among them are many seriously ill refugees.

The Maxmur camp has already been under a heavy embargo by the KDP since 17 July 2019. The people of the camp are not allowed to enter the cities of South Kurdistan and to enter the camp for basic needs from outside. Many people have lost their lives due to this embargo.

Tevgera Azadi said: “Instead of serving the refugees, the KDP has put the camp under embargo for 4 years.”

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## Yazidis in Europe condemn the international silence on attacks against Shengal and Maxmur

ANF | 24 MAY 2023

In a written statement, the European Yazidi Community Coordination said that the recent attacks against Shengal and Maxmur reveal the true face of Erdogan and his government, which is increasing crackdown on dissidents in Turkey and primarily responsible for the instability and conflicts in the region.

The statement continued: “Although the Iraqi central government seems to be responsible for the recent escalation in the Maxmur refugee camp, the main force behind the attacks is Erdogan and his local collaborators. The attempt to turn the Maxmur camp, which is under the auspices of the United Nations Refugee Committee, into an open prison clearly shows that the UN is under the influence of expansionist and aggressive forces in the region. The increasing attacks against the Yazidi community in Shengal and the frequent resettlement of pro-ISIS people in the region aim at completely removing the Yazidi community from the region.”

The statement noted that a civilian named Seid Eşur lost his life, and another civilian was injured in a drone attack carried out by the fascist Turkish state on May 22, 2023.

“It is obvious that Erdogan and his partners, who have played a key role in the emergence and growth of ISIS, unleashing their troops against the Yazidi community, did not swallow down Shengal's ability to defend itself, the freedom and the autonomy it deserved. It is a crime against humanity to constantly attack this community, which does not have problems with any other community, without discriminating between civilians, elderly people, women or children. Therefore, whoever attacks the Yazidi faith and community is no different from ISIS, no matter what reasons they have. The silence of many western countries, especially the UN, which recognizes the genocide against the Yazidi community, is unacceptable. This incoherence and hypocrisy should be eliminated immediately. Necessary reaction should be given, and precautions should be taken. Otherwise, they will be held responsible for the attacks.”

The European Yazidi Community Coordination called on “all our people, public opinion and especially the Yazidi community to raise concern over these attacks and show their democratic reactions.”

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## Iraqi army makes new move to besiege Maxmur Camp

ANF | MAXMUR | 25 MAY 2023

Early on Thursday, the Iraqi army once again took action to besiege the Martyr Rustem Cudi Refugee Camp in Maxmur.

Iraqi soldiers are trying to surround the wells that carry water to the camp in the Martyr Robar district. The people are resisting the siege.

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## Demo in solidarity with people of Maxmur in Solothurn

ANF | SOLOTHURN | 25 MAY 2023

The 5-day resistance of the people of Maxmur against the siege attempt launched by the Iraqi army forces was protested in Solothurn.

The Iraqi army is targeting the Martyr Rustem Cûdî Refugee Camp, which is under UN control. Kurds gathered at Bahntofplatz in the Swiss city and held a rally protesting the siege attempt. A German press text read by the activists described the resistance of the people of Maxmur against the attempt to surround Maxmur camp with iron fences. Activists underlined that the attack on Maxmur benefited from the support of the invading Turkish state and the KDP administration.

Martyr Firaz Dag People's Assembly co-chair Kaya Demir called on the United Nations and international institutions to take action to stop the siege of Maxmur.

Demir said: “The Maxmur Camp, where over 12 thousand people live, has been under attack since 20 May. The people in Maxmur, a camp which is under UN control, have protested this siege attempt for 5 days. Our call is to the UN and all relevant institutions to act and stop this attack.”

Speeches made by the European youth movements TCŞ and TekoJIN activists emphasized that young people “will never give up resistance. We will crown our resistance with victory, we will take action everywhere.”

— ★ —

## Maxmur People's Council calls for increased solidarity against the siege by the Iraqi army

AWYER BOTAN | MAXMUR | 25 MAY 2023

The Iraqi army has been besieging the Maxmur Camp in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) since 20 May. The camp, which is self-governed by refugees from Northern Kurdistan near Hewlêr (Erbil), is intended to be fenced in and turned into a huge open-air prison with watchtowers. The 12,000 residents of the camp are resisting this, day and night. Today, the Iraqi military has positioned additional units at strategically important locations around the camp.

Yusif Kara, co-chair of the Maxmur People's Council, spoke to ANF about the current situation, saying: "There are disagreements between the Iraqi government and us, which have escalated in recent days. We wanted to avoid it coming to this and have said several times that we don't want chaos and physical confrontations. What is being forced on us here is neither legitimate nor legal. We have communicated our demands to the institutions involved."

Remarking that the current escalation is based on a concept that was developed according to the plan of the Turkish state, Kara stated: "The Turkish state itself says this quite openly, and the Barzani family also says it. This concept is directed against all Kurds and all of Kurdistan. The United Nations and, on some level, the international coalition against ISIS are also involved in this plan. They are blind, deaf and mute in the face of what is happening. Everything indicates that this is a broad-based plan against our system of self-government."

Kara pointed out that the siege of Maxmur is taking place in parallel with the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan in Turkish captivity and the further developments in Kurdistan. He noted that the people of Maxmur had been driven out of Northern Kurdistan thirty years ago by the scorched-earth policy and forced to live in a refugee camp. Despite this, these people and the generations that followed them have never allowed themselves to be brought to their knees. "In the last few days, the situation has escalated. The people's resistance is a sign of dignity and makes us proud. Such examples are rare," he added.

So far, the siege has been prevented to a certain extent and no one from the camp is considering withdrawing, Kara said. "The Iraqi military, however, is insistent and speaks of a decision of the state and the government that must be enforced. From our point of view, there is no legitimacy to this. Although the UN's relationship with the camp broke off a long time ago, it is still a refugee camp with UN status and the residents have identity cards with UN stamps."

Officially, Maxmur is under the protection and control of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), but in practice the organisation is only nominally present. They left the camp during the attacks by ISIS in 2014 and did not return afterwards. On Tuesday, UN representatives arrived in Maxmur for talks on the current escalation.

Kara remarked that after the fall of the Baath regime, the Iraqi government signed an international agreement for the rights of refugees, which also applies to Maxmur. "However, the United Nations and espe-

cially the UN representatives in the region are under the influence of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Barzani clan, which only pursues its personal economic interests.”

“The rights of refugees are being violated here, especially the rights of children. This is all happening on the basis of false and baseless reports by the Barzani family and in cooperation with Turkey. In this way, pressure is being put on us. The UN is not fulfilling its obligations towards us as refugees in any form. Instead of contributing to a solution, they are behaving downright hostile in many places. In many ways, they are doing everything they can to get the camp dissolved,” Kara said.

According to Kara, the fact that UN representatives have now reappeared in Maxmur is only due to the persistent resistance of the population. “They were here once in 2018, but that was only in connection with security issues. After a tour of the camp, they left again. In 2022, there were talks in Baghdad and Mosul, but not a single activity in a positive sense took place. And today they are trying to understand what is going on. We sat down and talked to each other. We expressed very clearly the injustice committed by the Iraqi state. They said that they would get back to us after counselling. Our talks are continuing to ensure that they abide by the agreement they signed. We are in a very serious phase. The situation is exceptional. Only with resistance can we succeed. We have self-confidence. If we stand up for ourselves as a Kurdish nation inside and outside Kurdistan, there is nothing we cannot succeed in. In this context, we appeal to our people and to all those whose hearts beat for this movement, the Kurdish people and the revolution: strengthen solidarity in this difficult time. We thank all those who are taking to the streets for us.”



## People of Maxmur: Our resistance will continue until the siege is over

ANF | MAXMUR | 25 MAY 2023

The Iraqi army deployed troops to strategic points around the Maxmur refugee camp this morning and began digging trenches.

On the sixth day of the resistance against the military siege, residents of Maxmur put up resistance at every location where Iraqi troops were deployed, trying to fill up the ditches with their hands and shovels.

Ehmed Hilali, a camp resident taking part in the resistance, said that when the Iraqi army started digging trenches, people headed to two different points and tried to prevent it.

Hilali said: “Tensions arose between us and them. We did not take a step back. We will not leave our place until these attempts are over. We will confront them. If we had been to accept this treatment, we would have accepted it in North Kurdistan.”



Ferhan Didêrî, another camp resident, stated that some promises were made during talks in the past five days, but the Iraqi army went into action again in the early hours of the sixth day.

Didêrî said: “They wanted to besiege the camp with a huge military force. They are trying to take the camp completely under their control. However, their attempts will be frustrated by the great will and resistance of the people.”

Didêrî called on the Kurds all over the world to stand up against the siege attempt, adding: “They want to advance gradually and implement the plan instructed to them. We set up tents and we are resisting. We trust our people. We will break the siege. They cannot break the will of these people.”



## People of Maxmur fill up ditches with bare hands

REBER COLEMERG/AWYER BOTAN | MAXMUR | 25 MAY 2023

Despite five days of negotiations, the Iraqi army deployed troops to the strategic points of the Maxmur Refugee Camp in the morning, on the sixth day of the residents’ resistance, and started digging trenches in its ongoing attempt to surround the camp with barbed wire and watchtowers.

The residents of the camp declared that they would not allow a siege.

Seid Çomlek, a member of the Maxmur Diplomacy Committee, said: “The public backlash against the abrupt attempt of the Iraqi army has been very strong.”

Çomlek noted that the committee had several meetings with the authorities, stressing that they would not accept barbed wire and towers.

Çomlek pointed out that the attempt to siege the camp was prompted by Turkey and the KDP. He added that the Iraqi authorities promised to stop the siege during the talks but failed to keep it.

“We did not show any disrespect to the Iraqi government. Still, they want to enforce Turkey’s demands on us, which we do not accept. We want to resolve problems through dialogue,” said Çomlek, adding that this is the first time such a thing is happening.

Çomlek remarked that they were resisting using their democratic right, saying: “The Maxmur Camp has nothing to do but to resist. If barbed wire and towers are installed around the camp today, Turkey’s demands will increase even more in the future. Our people must remain vigilant.”

Çomlek concluded: “Early in the morning, the Iraqi army started digging ditches. People have resisted it. Mothers have taken action to fill up the ditches with their hands because they have nothing else. They use their bare hands. This is a message to all our people. What is happening is disrespect to us. Ditches are

dug for criminals and threats. We want to understand why they are digging ditches, which we will continue to reject.”

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## Peace Mothers condemn the siege of Maxmur

ANF | İZMİR | 25 MAY 2023

The Council of Peace Mothers in İzmir held a press conference condemning the Iraqi army’s attempt to besiege the Maxmur Refugee Camp under UN auspices in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

Speaking here, Peace Mothers Council member Hediye Korkut criticized Massoud Barzani, leader of South Kurdistan’s ruling party KDP, for not fulfilling his duty.

“The people of Maxmur fled the atrocities of the Turkish state and settled in Maxmur, where they continue to face persecution at the hands of Massoud Barzani. We demand an end to the cruelty they are facing, with their camp intended to be turned into an open prison. We are deeply hurt by the situation of the mothers there. We are familiar with their suffering. Is it not a shame what they are being put through? ”

Pointing out the fact that the people of Maxmur have paid a price, Korkut noted that the residents are subjected to strict measures in their settlement.

Appealing to Massoud Barzani, Korkut said: “We condemn this shame. We want to consider you a brother and see your fraternity. Respect the blood of martyrs and mothers. Our children, youngsters and elderly say that they are ready to sacrifice their lives. Listen to them and stop this atrocity. Do not heed those who commit atrocities. Extend the hand of fraternity. Today is the day of fraternity, not atrocity.”

Appealing to the women in the Barzani family, Korkut said: “Hear us and do not make the Barzani family a friend of the enemy. Do not let anyone get hurt. We demand peace.”

— ★ —

## Civil disobedience action for Maxmur at Iraqi Consulate in

### Bern

ANF | BERN | 26 MAY 2023

The Iraqi army has been besieging the Maxmur Camp in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq) since 20 May. The camp, which is self-governed by refugees from Northern Kurdistan near Hewlêr (Erbil), is intended to be fenced in and turned into a huge open-air prison with watchtowers. The 12,000 residents of

the camp are resisting this, day and night. On Thursday, the Iraqi military positioned additional units at strategically important locations around the camp.

Kurdish activists are staging a civil disobedience action in protest at the Iraqi army's siege of the Maxmur camp in the premises of the Iraqi Consulate in Bern, the capital of Switzerland.

Young activists made the following statement denouncing the military action against Maxmur:

“We, the Kurdish youth, will not take a step back. We stand with the residents of the Maxmur camp. This is the decision of the people. We will resist here. Like the people of Maxmur, we will not surrender our will. We did not surrender our will to the Turkish state, nor will we abandon it to the Iraqi state. The siege of Maxmur, which is also a dirty project of the Turkish state, means the siege of all of us. To resist it is to live. We will succeed. Rojava and Shengal have succeeded, and Maxmur will, too.”

— ★ —

## Femicide

### Grave of Jina Amini desecrated

ANF | 22 MAY 2023

The grave of Jina (Mahsa) Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish girl killed in September 2022 by the morality police for "wearing the hijab in an inappropriate way", was desecrated.

It is not yet known who broke the glass plate covering Jina's portrait engraved on her tombstone or the exact date of the desecration.

Jina Amini was born on 22 June 2000 in Saqqez, in Rojhilat (East Kurdistan). Because of the ban on Kurdish first names, she officially bore the first name of Mahsa. She was arrested by the morality police for "wearing the hijab in an inappropriate way" on 13 September 2022 in Tehran, where she had gone with her brother.

She died three days later in the hospital she was brought to after being beaten and tortured in police custody. On 17 September, during her funeral in her hometown of Saqqez, in Rojhilat (Eastern Kurdistan), the women removed their veils and chanted "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî" (Woman, Life, Freedom), protesting against the obligation to wear the hijab.

The protests in Rojhilat and Iran continue today despite the murder of hundreds of civilians, including children, and the arrest of tens of thousands of others. Several demonstrators were sentenced to death and are currently being executed.



## Journalist who exposed rape to stand trial while alleged rapists walk free

ANF | VAN | 26 MAY 2023

Journalist Oktay Candemir covered the rape case in Bêgirî (Muradiye) district last January. He described how the “girl, studying at Muradiye Nizamettin Aktaş High School, was made to use drugs since 2019, and then was systematically sexually assaulted. She was suspended from school on the grounds that she was a drug addict. The people who took pictures of Y., including police and officers, raped Y. for years, using the pictures to blackmail her.”

Six people, accused by Y. were detained. Two of them were released on condition of judicial control, while 4 were arrested. A confidentiality order was placed on the file. Journalist Candemir went to the Police Department and gave a statement due to the investigation opened against him. Candemir was asked questions such as “Why did you make the news”.

The alleged rapists were released, while a lawsuit was filed against journalist Candemir using article 217/A of the censorship law passed by the parliament by the AKP, that allows journalists to be prosecuted for “spreading” false news. Van Public Prosecutor's Office submitted its indictment against Candemir to the court that accepted it. Candemir, who exposed the crime, will appear in court on 6 June 2023.



## Human Rights Violations

### Police take 19 people into custody in 5 cities

ANF | ANKARA | 22 MAY 2023

Police raids were carried out on many addresses within the scope of an investigation launched against those who attended the Newroz celebrations in Ankara. 19 people were taken into custody in house raids in 5 cities.

People's Democratic Party (HDP) Party Assembly member Bedriye Irmak, as well as Nebahat Çalpan, Halil Güzel, Barış Güzel, Ahmet Güzel, Aykut Bozkuş, Cahit Gümüş, Mert Üstündağ, Yasin Bahçivan, Samet Ayataç and Kadir Aytaç were among those taken into custody. The detainees were taken to the Ankara Security Directorate.



## Police attack youths dancing to Kurdish music in Istanbul

ANF | ISTANBUL | 22 MAY 2023

In the Kadiköy district of Istanbul, young people dancing to Kurdish music were attacked by police on Sunday and their loudspeaker was confiscated. When the young people protested, the police used tear gas. A scuffle ensued, after which a police officer fired shots into the air. The youths fled and were pursued by the police. Four young men were taken into custody and ill-treated.

The abused youths were placed on the ground with their hands tied behind their backs, and a nationalist march was played at the same time. At first it was unclear where they were taken. According to the latest information, they are now in the courthouse in Kartal.

At the beginning of May, a Kurdish street musician was stabbed to death by a Turkish fascist in Kadiköy. The victim was Cihan Aymaz (30) from Kars, a member of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and a well-known street musician in Istanbul. He had been questioned a few days earlier because of a protest song against Erdoğan. His murderer, Mehmet Caymaz, allegedly asked the Kurdish musician to sing the nationalist-racist song "Ölürüm Türkiyem" (I die for you Turkey). When Aymaz refused, the killer allegedly stabbed him.



## Police take many into custody in new political operations in different cities

ANF | IZMIR | 23 MAY 2023

Soldiers and police raided many houses earlier this morning in the Nisêbîn (Nusaybin) and Qoser (Kızıltepe) districts of Mardin (Mêrdîn). HDP District co-chair Şiyar Koç, village headman Faris Alak and Fırat Demir were detained in the raid on the rural neighbourhood of Mendere in Nusaybin.

In Kızıltepe, former Democratic Regions Party (DBP) District Co-chair Mahmut Damar, Metin Yılmaz and Sami İldem were detained on charges of "aiding an illegal organization".

### Police raids in 5 cities

Within the scope of the investigation carried out by the Mersin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, simultaneous raids were carried out on 28 addresses in Mersin, Ankara, Antalya, Adana and Izmir. It was stated that the executives of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), Çukurova Association for Assistance with the

Families of Prisoners and Convicts and their relatives (TUAY-DER) were taken into custody during the raids.

The investigation was carried out with the allegation of “making propaganda for a terrorist organization” and “financial support to the detainees”. The Çukurova TUAY-DER building was also raided and the searches are continuing.

Özkan Yalçın, the brother of journalist Hakan Yalçın, who was released on 26 May, was also taken into custody. Yalçın, who was detained in Ankara, was tortured by the police. Yalçın's family will file a criminal complaint against police violence.

Some of the people taken into custody as part of the Mersin-based investigation are as follows: Selim Ekici, director of Çukurova TUAY-DER, Cengiz Dere from DBP, Kadri Ezer and Özkan Yalçın.

### **MA journalist taken into custody**

Mesopotamia Agency (MA) journalist Delal Akyüz was detained during house raids in Izmir. Akyüz was taken to the Izmir Provincial Security Directorate in Çankaya.

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## **Kurdish workers detained and beaten by police in Kadıköy talk about their experience**

**ZEYNEP KURAY | ISTANBUL | 23 MAY 2023**

The Kurdish workers, who were detained by the police while on the beach of Kadıköy on their days off, were released under judicial control by the Anatolian Courthouse 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace on the charge of “resisting the police”. The workers were at all times accompanied by Green Left Party deputy, lawyer Cengiz Çiçek, ÖHD and ÇHD lawyers. They were greeted with slogans, Kurdish songs and applause in front of the courthouse. The workers had their faces and various parts of their bodies covered with bruises due to the torture they were subjected to by the police before and after their detention.

They spoke to ANF about their experience.

### **‘We did not dance halay, we did not listen to music’**

Although it was stated on social media that they were detained for dancing halay, the workers emphasized that when the police arrived, they were not dancing and the music was quiet. Construction worker Kadir Gülşen said that two police cars came to the scene because of another fight in the Kadıköy. “We were sitting, the police came to us and did an ID check. One of the police officers pointed to the sound system we brought to listen to music and asked who owned it. Then he confiscated it and put it in the vehicle. When we reacted to this, he said to my aunt's son, ‘I can take you if I want,’ and took him to the car. When the

reactions increased, they sprayed us with pepper gas. When I saw the police turning towards my brother, spraying pepper gas and beating him in the face, I intervened. When he sprayed pepper spray in my face, I tried to defend myself. He suddenly took the gun from his waist and started shooting in the air.”

Gülşen reacted to his release on the condition of house arrest. He said he came to Istanbul from Amed to work, and added: “We came to Istanbul to work. We are working in the construction of the Financial Center. We were attacked by the police just because we were sitting on the beach with a music system in Kadıköy. We had nothing to do with anyone. The police attacked us unfairly. But again it was us who paid. Now I am under house arrest, I have no home here, I am staying at the construction site, I will have to return to Diyarbakır and I will not be able to work. They have not only victimized me, but my whole family.”

Seyithan Gülşen, cousin of Kadir Gülşen, said: “We stopped the music when the police came. They came and checked ID, asked who the sound system belonged to and confiscated it. When we reacted, we were beaten and taken into custody.”

Gülşen drew attention to the fact that they were battered by the police both in the vehicle and threatened not to ask for a report of assault when they went to the hospital for examination. The workers said that they were constantly exposed to sexist curses. “We were also beaten on our return from the hospital.”

### **‘The police officer who broke his finger while beating us accused us’**

Stating that the torture continued in Kadıköy police station, Gülşen said: “When we arrived at the police station, we were beaten again. We were handcuffed in reverse by the police, who sprayed us with pepper gas and fired a gun in Kadıköy. While shaking his fist, he broke his finger and blamed us. He filed a criminal complaint against us saying we had broken his finger. While I was lying face down, a commissioner came and stepped on the victory sign tattoo on my waist and arm with his shoes, repeatedly. He kicked me in the stomach. I couldn’t breathe.”

### **Arrested for taking a video**

İdris Akpınar, another worker, stated that he was attacked by the police only because he was taking a video with his phone as a witness of the incident. Akpınar, a moto courier, described the events as follows: “When I was going to my house from Kadıköy, I saw a group of young people confronted by police over a sound system. They confiscated the sound system while they were doing ID checks. When the young people reacted to this, they took the two of them and started to beat them. So I ran to the police and said, ‘What are you doing? I started making a video. At that time, a police said, ‘Are you shooting a video? I walked away so as not to give my phone away. Again, when the same police officer asked, ‘Why are you filming us?’ I replied that they committed a crime and beat people. ‘Are we committing a crime? Are we battering? Then they took me into custody by beating me, saying, ‘Come and see’.”

Akpınar said: “The police threatened to say, ‘If you say we beat you, there will be a return,’”said Akpınar, who had his left eye and behind his ears bruised because of the beating. He said that they filed a criminal complaint against the police.

## Ma Music Coordinator taken into custody

ANF | AMED | 23 MAY 2023

As part of the investigation launched by the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, 191 people were taken into custody in house raids in 21 cities on 25 April, and more than 50 people, including journalists and lawyers, were sent to prison.

As part of the same investigation, MA Music Coordinator Şêrko Kanîwar (Aslan Aydoğan) was taken into custody at Amed Airport, when he returned from Germany. Aydoğan is expected to be referred to the courthouse today.

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## Another civilian kidnapped in occupied Afrin

ANF | 23 MAY 2023

The so-called "Military Police", a paramilitary criminal network established by the Turkish state in the occupied Afrin region, kidnapped a civilian from the Shiye district.

According to local sources, 40-year-old Mihemed Osman Koçer was taken to a detention centre in central Afrin and his aftermath remains unknown.

### **Afrin occupied since 2018**

Afrin Canton was the westernmost canton of Rojava and North and East Syria, home to 200,000 ethnic Kurds. Though the population was overwhelmingly Kurdish, it was home to diverse religious groups including Yazidis, Alawites and Christians alongside Sunni Muslims.

On 20 January 2018, Turkey launched air strikes on 100 locations in Afrin, as the onset of an invasion they dubbed 'Operation Olive Branch.'

The Turkish Airforce indiscriminately shelled civilians as well as YPG/YPJ positions, while a ground assault was carried out by factions and militias organised under the umbrella of the Turkish-backed National Army.

By 15 March, Turkish-backed militias had encircled Afrin city and placed it under artillery bombardment. A Turkish airstrike struck the city's only functioning hospital, killing 16 civilians.

Civilians fled and the SDF retreated, and by 18 March Turkey was in de facto occupation of Afrin. Between 400 and 500 civilians died in the invasion, overwhelmingly as a result of Turkish bombing. Other civilians were summarily executed in the field.



Prior to the Turkish invasion, Afrin had been one of the most peaceful and secure parts of Syria, virtually never seeing combat during the civil war bar occasional skirmishes between YPG/YPJ and jihadi forces on its borders. As a result, Afrin offered peaceful sanctuary to over 300,000 internally displaced people from elsewhere in Syria.

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## At least 67 detained in political genocide operation in several cities

ANF | 23 MAY 2023

In the run-up to the run-off election for the presidency in Turkey, detention operations were carried out today against the Kurdish opposition and its socialist allies. As of today, at least 67 people have been taken into custody in several cities. The operations were ordered by various public prosecutor's offices, the pre-text being the usual accusations in connection with support for alleged terrorist organisations or membership in such an organisation. The concrete accusation usually remains in the dark at first, as those affected are denied legal counsel in political proceedings and no access to files is possible.

### Tekirdağ

In an investigation conducted by the Tekirdağ Chief Public Prosecutor's Office in western Turkey, up to thirty people were detained on the vague charge of "membership of an organisation". The detentions were made following house raids in Tekirdağ, Edirne and Çanakkale that targeted politicians of the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party), DBP (Democratic Regions Party) and SYKP (Socialist Re-Establishment Party). Those detained by name are Ömer Faruk Kırıç, Seza Büyükkılıç, Turgut Haskan, Veysel Kutluay, Mehmet Akyürek, Hilmi Karaoğlan, Zübeyde Karaoğlan, Serkan Karaoğlan, Senem Özbey, Servet Taşkın, Mehmet Akyürek, Sibel Kayıkçı, Cezmi Yaman, Rahmi Direk, Ayla Eroğlu, Ömer Faruk Kırıç and Deniz Erdem.

### Mardin

In the province of Mardin, 13 people were detained for "supporting terrorism"; in the districts of Kızıltepe, Nusaybin, Savur and Dêrik, where numerous houses were stormed and searched by the police. Those detained are Mahmut Damar, Metin Yılmaz, Sami İldem, Şükrü Durgan, Abdullah Çelik, Yavuz Demirkıran, Osman Siği, Recep Türk, Hüseyin Söylemez, Şiyar Koç, Faris Alak, Fırat Demir and Mehmet Şerif Kavak.

### Mersin

Flats in Mersin, Ankara, Antalya, Adana and Izmir were searched as part of an investigation led by the Mersin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office. The police broke down doors and vandalised the interior. Out of 28 persons wanted for detention, 24 have been taken into custody so far. Those arrested, including a journalist, HDP and DBP politicians and members of the prisoners' aid organisation TUAYDER and the

HDP Youth Council, are accused of sharing social media posts and providing financial support to prisoners. Those detained by name are MA correspondent Delal Akyüz, Ibrahim Kaylan, Emrah Deniz, Devrim Aydın, Kadri Ezel, Cengiz Dere, Esmer Oğuz, Selim Ekici, Azat Taş, Süreyya Ceylan, Özkan Yalçın, Beşir Acar, Yusuf Korkut, Nebi Korkut, Ramazan Çatuk, Ramazan Aslan, Ferhat Demir, Ibrahim Durak, Engin Aydemir, Erhan Beyhan, Hamza Arpaç, Mehmet Kapan and Özkan Yalçın.

## Ankara

On Monday, 19 people were detained in Ankara and other cities on the basis of an investigation in connection with participation in a Newroz celebration. The detention period was extended today, with the charge being “terrorist propaganda”.

Hundreds of Kurdish and left-wing opposition activists, including journalists, lawyers, artists and politicians, have been arrested in Turkey ahead of the parliamentary and presidential elections on 14 May. The run-off election between presidential candidates Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AKP) and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP) will take place on Sunday, May 28.

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## Journalist Ferhat Çelik detained in Amed

ANF | AMED | 23 MAY 2023

Kurdish journalist Ferhat Çelik, concessionaire of the Mezopotamya News Agency (MA), has been taken into custody in Amed (tr. Diyarbakir). The detention took place at the police station in the Huzurevleri neighbourhood when Çelik was responding to a summons over an investigation conducted by the Diyarbakir Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office.

In the same investigation, 191 people were detained in 21 cities across Turkey on 25 April. More than fifty people, including journalists and lawyers, were imprisoned on alleged terror charges.

Ferhat Çelik is permanently at the focus of state repression. Various cases are pending against the journalist, most of which are accused of “spreading propaganda of a terrorist organisation”. Earlier this month, Çelik and his colleague Idris Yayla were sentenced to 15 months in prison in Van for “anti-state reporting”.

In 2020, Çelik was held in pre-trial detention for several months because he and seven other journalists were accused of “violating the intelligence law” for their reporting on the death of an employee of the Turkish intelligence agency MIT in Libya.

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## Police take 12 people into custody in Mardin and Şirnak

ANF | 24 MAY 2023

12 people were taken into custody in house raids carried out by the police in the morning hours in the central Artuklu, Kerboran (Dargeçit) districts of Mardin and Hezex (Idil) in the province of Şirnak.

Three brothers, Ramazan, Agit and Heja Kalkan and two sisters, Hividar and Berivan Taş, were detained following a house raid in the Saraçoğlu District of Artuklu in Mardin. Fırat Akar and Rojhat Altaş were also detained in Artuklu. It was stated that they were detained within the scope of the political operation initiated by the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office targeting the HDP Youth Assembly's congress. Those detained will be taken to Amed.

In Kerboran, Merve Oğuz and one person whose name could not be learned were taken into custody. These detentions were part of the police political operation launched by the Mardin Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

Meanwhile, the statements of 17 people who were taken into custody in Mardin on Tuesday, continue at the Gendarmerie.

### Şirnak

Three young people named Civan Karaviş, Ümit Geçgel and Yusuf Kargol were taken into custody in house raids in Hezex, in Şirnak and taken to the district police headquarters.

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## Suspicious death of a student in Bitlis

ANF | BITLIS | 24 MAY 2023

A 3rd year student of the Department of English Language and Literature at Bitlis Eren University, originally from the village of Xanik (Böğrüpek), in Van, Habip Sivi allegedly committed suicide in the male dormitory of Bitlis Eren University KYK. Dormitory officials notified Sivi's family 12 hours after the alleged suicide. When the family arrived in Bitlis, they learned that the autopsy had been carried out without the family or their lawyer being informed.

Sivi's relatives met with the prosecutor, dormitory officials and the police. The dormitory manager said he learned of the suicide when the students who stayed in their rooms broke the news in the morning. The prosecutor and medical examiner claimed the incident was a suicide, that he first shoved a plastic bag down his throat and then choked on the bag he put on his head. The family, who found the death of their child suspicious, requested a new autopsy, which was refused.

The late notification of his family and the fact that the autopsy was carried out without informing his family and lawyers raises suspicions about claims that Sivi committed suicide.

The victim's uncle, Salih Biçer, said they were informed 12 hours after the suicide and the autopsy was done secretly. "They informed us 12 hours after the suicide. When we went there, the prosecutor, the medical examiner, the rector, the head of the dormitory were in the hospital, they had done an autopsy (...). It is said that he committed suicide by putting a bag over his head. He has two roommates. They never heard anything? They said that "when [his roommates] called him for breakfast, they saw that he had committed suicide". The prosecutor, the director of the dormitory, the rector make contradictory statements. Now they say, 'the roommates were away that day.' All of this raises serious questions for us. Habip was talking with his family that evening. He had no worries or problems. We suspect he was killed. Something happened to this kid, but they're hiding it from us. We demand a second autopsy. The Bitlis public prosecutor's office refused this request and we are going to seize that of Van. We want it to be fully investigated, even if it is a suicide."

### **Education Union: We have serious doubts**

Eğitim Sen, the education union branch co-chair in Van, Murat Atabay, said: "The fact that the family was informed late [about the suicide], the autopsy was carried out without informing the family and their lawyer, and the claims of suicide are not reasonable and logical, and raise serious suspicions about this death. The expectation of his family and the public is to investigate the incident fully and to accept requests in order to eliminate contradictions and concerns related to the incident."

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## **33 people in Urfa face an investigation over press statement**

ANF | URFA | 24 MAY 2023

Urfa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has once again targeted citizens enjoying their right to assembly and demonstration. An investigation has been launched against a total of 33 people, 19 of whom are lawyers.

The reason for the investigation is a press statement made in front of the Urfa Courthouse on April 25. The prosecutor accuses 33 people of violating "Law No. 2911 on meetings and demonstrations".

In April, the Urfa Branch of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) protested the detention of more than 190 people, including many journalists, politicians and lawyers, after an Amed-based police operation.

The names of citizens under investigation are as follows: "Lawyers Sümeyye Koç, Nahide Polat Aslan, Müslüm Saraçoğlu, Mehmet Ali Aslan, Fazilet Taştan, Ayşe Şehirban Demirel, Sevda Çelik Özbingöl, Gizem Dilara İnal Gülhan, Hidayet Enmek, Ali Arslan, Mustafa Göngen, Dilan Demir, Serhan Paydaş, İHD Urfa Co-Chair lawyer Mustafa Vefa, HDP Provincial Co-Chair Ahmet Atış, ÖHD Urfa Branch Co-Chairs Meral Halat and İbrahim Halil Öyke, 3 lawyers whose names could not be identified, Greens and Left Future Party Urfa Deputy Ferit Şenyavaş, HDP Provincial Co-Chair Garip Yeşil, former HDP

Deputy Nusretin Maçın, HDP Eyyübiye District Co-Chair Emin Tural and İbrahim Halil Alpay, Metropolitan Municipality Council Member Sema Aışeođlu, Memduh Kızgit, Atilla Yazar, İHD executive member Cemal Babaođlu, Urfa Medical Chamber Head Bulut Ezer, SES Branch Co-chair Salih Karataş, Mehmet Sıdkı Dehşet and Salih Canbeyli.”

## Investigation against those who attended the May Day event

A similar investigation has been launched against 7 people who participated in the May Day celebration.

Those subjected to the investigation are: HDP Urfa Provincial Co-Chair Ahmet Atıř, ÖHD Urfa Branch Co-Chair İbrahim Halil Öyke, Lawyer Bülent Ařa, lawyer Sevda Çelik Özbingöl, Education and Science Workers' Union (EĐİTİM SEN) Branch Co-Chair Mahmut Binici, Chamber of Physicians Urfa Branch manager Kemal Yüksekaya and Green Left Party Youth Council Member Mahmut Çoban. Urfa Chief Public Prosecutor's Office accuses 7 people of “inciting hatred and hostility”.

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## 12 musicians detained for participation in opening of Green Left Party election office

ANF | İZMİR | 24 MAY 2023

The AKP regime's prosecuting authorities continue to turn up the repression screw against the Kurdish opposition in the run-up to the run-off election for the presidency. In the western Turkish coastal province of Izmir, at least twelve musicians were taken into custody on Wednesday on alleged “terror” charges. The detentions, coordinated by the Turkish police's counter-terrorism department, were accompanied by raids, and the homes of those involved were meticulously searched.

The charge directed against the musicians is spreading propaganda of a “terrorist organization”. The accusation is based on their participation in the opening ceremonies of election offices of the Green Left Party, under whose banner the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) contested the parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey on 14 May. Those affected by the detention operation include Sertan Özdemir, řakir Yiđit Özdemir, Cemal Emen, Rıdvan Kaya, Fatime Tandođan, Eyüp Azrak, Gökhan Gönluacı and Kadir Yasin Temur. They have been taken to Izmir police headquarters and have not yet been allowed contact with lawyers.

With the detentions in Izmir, the number of people taken into custody since yesterday in nationwide raids against the Kurdish democratic opposition and its socialist allies has risen to at least 101. On Wednesday morning, 22 people were detained in Mardin, řırnak, Antep and Manisa on the usual terrorist charges. On Tuesday, police took a total of 67 people into custody in various cities across the country.

The run-off election between incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is both head of government and AKP leader, and CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdarođlu will take place on Sunday, May 28. The opposition is

calling on people with intense urgency to go to the polls in the second round as well and to end the one-man regime.

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## German police target climate activists

ANF | 24 MAY 2023

German police carried out nation-wide raids targeting climate activists from the group Letzte Generation (Last Generation).

The Munich Prosecutor's Office said in a statement that the police raids targeted 7 activists of the group on suspicion of "violations committed by Last Generation activists" as part of an investigation.

7 members of the group, aged between 22 and 38, are accused of "collecting 1.4 million euros for "promotion on the Internet" and "illegal actions".

Two activists of the group are accused of attempting to "sabotage the Trieste-Ingolstadt pipeline" in April 2022.

The Last Generation stands out as the most visible environmental organization in Germany currently.

The group has engaged in numerous acts of civil disobedience in recent months to push the government to step up the fight against climate change.

The police raids took place in seven states. The bank accounts of those targeted in the operation were seized.

Hundreds of other legal procedures have been initiated against the group. Social Democratic Prime Minister Olaf Scholz's government describes the group's actions as "disrupting public order".

Recently, a Heilbronn court sentenced three climate activists to 5, 4 and 3 months in prison.

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## Dozens detained in Hakkari

ANF | HAKKARI | 25 MAY 2023

The wave of persecution against the democratic opposition in Turkey in the run-up to Sunday's run-off election for the presidency continues. In the Kurdish resistance stronghold of Hakkari, Turkish police stormed dozens of homes and detained at least 30 people on Thursday. Those taken into custody are cur-

rently at the Hakkari police station, accused of “propaganda for a terrorist organisation” or “membership in a terrorist organisation”.

Over a hundred people from the HDP and the Green Left Party were detained in similar political raids in recent days.



## Turkey has highest prevalence of modern slavery in Europe and Central Asia, says report

ANF | 26 MAY 2023

The Australian human rights organization Walk Free has published its Global Slavery Index.

The report indicates that, as of 2021, 49,6 million people live as “modern slaves,” and recalls that this number was 10 million in 2016.

Turkey ranks fifth and has the highest prevalence of modern slavery in Europe and Central Asia. It is also among countries taking the least action to respond to modern slavery in the region.

According to the report, “the government has taken some positive steps since the 2018 Global Slavery Index, including by assigning the Human Rights and Equality Institution (HREI) to independently monitor its response to human trafficking. However, significant gaps in the response remain: the national action plan has not been updated since 2009, and efforts to identify victims among vulnerable populations such as refugees and the LGTBQI+ community are insufficient, resulting in some foreign victims being detained and deported. Vulnerability to modern slavery is primarily driven by discrimination towards these minority groups, as well as the effects of conflicts (particularly in Syria), the deterioration of women’s rights and protection amid growing political polarisation, and the repression of human rights defenders and political opponents.”

The 2023 Global Slavery Index (GSI) estimates that “on any given day in 2021, there were 1.3 million individuals living in modern slavery in Turkey. This equates to a prevalence of 15.6 people in modern slavery for every thousand people in the country. Turkey has the highest prevalence of modern slavery out of 47 countries assessed in Europe and Central Asia, and is among countries with the highest prevalence globally (5 out of 160). It also has the second highest estimated total number of people living in modern slavery in the region, and falls within the top ten globally. This estimate does not include figures on the use of children in armed conflict, or human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal, which evidence indicates does occur in Turkey.”

### Modern slavery definition

Walk Free identifies “modern slavery” as a term that refers to situations of exploitation where a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power.

According to the organization, modern slavery includes forced labor, debt bondage, forced marriage, other slavery and slavery-like practices, human trafficking, and the sale, trafficking, and exploitation of children.

Besides having the highest prevalence of modern slavery in Europe and Central Asia, Turkey is also among the countries taking the least action to respond to modern slavery in the region.

According to the report by Walk Free, the countries estimated to have the highest prevalence of modern slavery tend to be conflict-affected, have state-imposed forced labor, and have weak governance.

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## Dozens detained in Bingöl and Ağrı

ANF | 26 MAY 2023

Turkey continues to tighten the repressive screw against the Kurdish population. In the province of Bingöl, several villages in the district of Karlıova were stormed by the gendarmerie (military police) early on Friday morning and house searches were carried out. The reason given was that a 21-year-old man from the village of Xişok was being sought. Several people were taken into custody, and the operation is continuing.

In the district of Tutak in the province of Ağrı, police and army units carried out joint raids on several flats. The background to the raids was an investigation against dozens of people on charges of propaganda for a "terrorist" organisation. Further details on the background were not given. According to initial information, the operation is mainly directed against young people. So far, at least 35 people have been detained, and the number is expected to increase in the course of the day.

In the shadow of the parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey, one wave of purges within the Kurdish democratic opposition has been following the next for weeks. Especially in constituencies won by candidates of the Green Left Party in the election for the new parliament on 14 May, the repressive apparatus is in full swing in the run-up to Sunday's run-off election for the presidency. In the first four days of this week alone, at least 177 people associated with the Green Left Party, including politicians, activists, musicians, trade unionists, lawyers and journalists, have been detained in police operations in various cities.

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## Kurdish politician Ceylan Aslan faces up to 15 years in prison

ANF | AMED | 26 MAY 2023

Deposed by the Turkish Ministry of Interior, Ceylan Aslan, a former member of Ergani Municipal Council, appeared before a judge at Diyarbakır 11th High Criminal Court on Friday. Aslan is accused of partic-



icipating in press briefings, meetings, actions and events organized on the occasion of the hunger strike launched by Democratic Society Congress (DTK) Co-Chair Leyla Güven in 2018-2019, and other actions and events organized by her party.

The prosecution argued that the events organized for Leyla Güven had been banned by the governor's office, and that Aslan participated in these actions and other events “following the calls of the (terrorist) organization”, meaning the PKK.

The prosecution further claimed that Aslan “has a hierarchical relationship with the organization in question, has organic ties to it, and knowingly acted in line with its purposes.” The prosecutor requested that Aslan be sentenced for “membership in the organization” and “violating the law on demonstrations and meetings”.

The court accepted the request for additional time for Aslan's defence against the opinion and adjourned the hearing to September 27.

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## General Elections in Turkey

### Campus Witches make “purple chain for life” in Izmir against misogynistic AKP-MHP politics

ANF | İZMİR | 22 MAY 2023

Campus Witches organized a “Purple chain for life” in Izmir against the misogynistic politics implemented in the country. The women formed a chain holding the photographs of the murdered women, and chanted slogans such as “The murdered women are our rebellion”, “We do not keep silent, we are not afraid, we do not obey” and “Women will hold the AKP accountable”.

#### ‘Erdogan will lose’

Zilan Kubat from Campus Witches said that “despite all the cheating in the 14 May elections, Erdogan got 49.5 percent of the votes and added that this showed that the AKP is losing.”

Kubat stated that “the AKP built a system that controlled the lives of women, impoverished people, hindered freedom of thought and expression, arrested thousands of people unjustly, rewarded murderers of women and rapists during its rule.”

## ‘Building a new life is in our hands’

Kubat said that the AKP-MHP government attacked the rights of children and women the most for 22 years and added: “Women were targeted in almost all the rallies of the People’s Alliance during the electoral campaign. We will not stop raising our struggle against organized misogyny. As young women, we will continue to raise our struggle against those who want to deprive us of our future. Our answer will be to struggle. This dark fascist government, which makes our lives difficult, is not invincible. It is entirely in our hands to build a new life and to increase our gains. We can do that after the elections on 28 May.”

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## Free Women’s Movement: We won’t surrender our hope, future and freedom to tyranny and fascism

ANF | 22 MAY 2023

The Free Women’s Movement (TJA) released a statement urging the public to participate actively in the second round of presidential elections on 28 May.

The TJA emphasised the significant role of Kurdish women in the global fight against fascism, stating, “The revolt against the longest-standing colony has today turned into a revolution of freedom against fascism all over the world, especially in Kurdistan and Turkey.”

Expressing their conviction that the organised power of women would once again dismantle the misogynistic regime, they declared: “We firmly believe that this organised power of women, their resistance traditions and determination to struggle will once again destroy this misogynist fascism.”

Their statement also stressed their responsibility to challenge the current government and strive for women’s freedom and social liberation, asserting, “We will not surrender our hope, future and freedom to tyranny and fascism.”

The TJA called upon all segments of society who desire democracy to join forces in rebuilding social liberation: “We call on all sectors of society who want democracy, to push into reverse on 28 May the fascism we forced to a stop on 14 May, and to rebuild social liberation.”

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## ATA Alliance to support Erdoğan in the runoff on May 28

ANF | 22 MAY 2023

The three rivals, AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and far-right alliance candidate Sinan Oğan, failed to get over 50 percent of the votes in the presidential election held in Turkey and North Kurdistan on May 14.

According to the Supreme Electoral Board (YSK), Tayyip Erdoğan received 49,51 percent of the vote; Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu 44,88 percent and Sinan Oğan 5,17 percent.

The presidential election will go to a runoff, which is scheduled to take place on May 28, Sunday.

The candidate of the far-right ATA Alliance, Sinan Oğan, announced in a press statement on Monday that they would support Erdoğan in the second round.



## Peace Mothers: Go to the polls in the second round of elections

ANF | VAN | 23 MAY 2023

Voters in Turkey, Kurdistan and abroad are going to the polls for the second round of the presidential elections on May 28. The Van Peace Mothers Initiative urged voters to vote in this election which will shape the future of peoples of Turkey.

### **‘Vote for justice and peace’**

Zekeriya Kaya, a member of the Van Peace Mothers Initiative, called on voters to vote on 28 May.

She said: “Go to the polls for justice and peace. Wherever you are in the world, cast your vote for peace, brotherhood, and mothers. This election is very important for these lands to be free and for people not to die again. As Peace Mothers, we do not want war, we want justice, peace, freedom, brotherhood and jin jiyen azadi. I am especially calling on people in Europe: they must go to the polls for peace. Everyone must join hands to advocate peace. All mothers have similar sufferings. That’s why we don’t separate mothers.”

### **‘We will succeed this time’**

Another Peace Mother Asya Özlü said: “Everyone should go to the polls. Hopefully, we will succeed this time. We want peace both in the country and in the whole world. This election is very important, so everyone should vote relying on their conscience.”

### **‘Do not accept this oppression’**

Peace Mother Besna Aydoğa said: “I would like to say this on behalf of the Peace Mothers in Van: All women, all mothers, stand up and vote so that no one should die any more, by convincing other women and mothers to go to the polls in this election. There is persecution against the Kurdish people.

All Kurds and Kurdish mothers should know this well. They should not accept this oppression and cast their vote. Nobody should refrain from the polls. Hopefully, we will succeed this time. In particular, our people in Europe are more comfortable than us. They are not persecuted like us. That's why they should go to the polls.”

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## Construction workers' union: Go to the polls to get rid of the AKP-MHP government

ANF | ISTANBUL | 24 MAY 2023

Dev-Yapı-İş executive Nihat Demir stated that they will go to vote on 28 May to defend labor, future and freedom against those who make this life miserable for workers. He said they would vote for Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.

Nihat Demir is the director of the Revolutionary Construction and Road Workers Union (Dev-Yapı-İş). Demir said: “We will go to vote on 28 May against those who poison this life, our labor, our freedom, our future, so that our unborn children can be born free and live with better standards in better conditions.”

Noting that they have both been working in construction and continuing their union activities for years, Demir said: “There are long hours of work, compulsory shifts. Although we work overtime, we do not receive any overtime pay. We are exposed to a lot of dust. We have many accidents because of this policy of lack of supervision and impunity. Some of us get crippled, some of us die, some of us stay in bed for months. That's why we try to organize as a union wherever we can. We try to be the voice of construction workers.”

Demir said: “We are fired from our jobs. We are exposed to racism. They usurp our right to report, they usurp our severance pay. The labour policies of this state go against workers. They brought more unemployment, more unhappiness, more poverty. They darkened our lives.”

### Vote to change things

Demir stated that the construction workers will go to the polls in the second round of elections to be held on 28 May against the oppression they experience, and said: “My call is to construction workers, laborers, women and young people. Please, go to the polls on 28 May. Let's vote for a dignified life. Let's get rid of these oppressive policies and this fascism. Let's do our best to elect Kılıçdaroğlu.”

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## Kurdish Freedom and Democracy Alliance calls on people to vote for a change and democracy

ANF | AMED | 24 MAY 2023

The Kurdish Freedom and Democracy Alliance, which includes the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), the Greens and Left Future Party (Green Left Party), the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the Kurdistan Communist Party (KKP), the Human and Freedom Party (PIA), the Kurdistan Socialist Party (PSK), the Revolutionary Democratic Kurdish Association (DDKD) and the Azadi Party, released a written statement concerning the second round of the presidential election to be held on May 28.

The statement on Wednesday said: "The policy of denial, assimilation and violence against our people continues increasingly. Policies for the protection of the current status quo are being promoted again due to the Kurdish phobia. The government has no permanent solution proposal for the Kurdish question and Turkey's basic problems. As usual, we witnessed an unfair election process in the first round. We saw an antidemocratic election period during which all the resources of the state were put at the service of the campaign of the ruling bloc. Despite all the manipulation and illegal methods, the People's Alliance lost the support of the voters in the May 14 election and the current president was not elected in the first round."

### 'People's Alliance feeds on Kurdish hatred'

The statement pointed out that the rights of the Kurds were sacrificed on the altar of "security" issues and "survival" of the state. It continued: "During the first round of elections, the candidate and the components of the People's Alliance pivoted around the historical Kurdish hostility in their election campaign, and tried to polarize the society and politics. The polarizing election campaign based on the fear concerning the Kurdish question, which is Turkey's main issue, is unfortunately maintained on the eve of the second round. We condemn this discriminatory hateful campaign against our people."

### 'A historic election'

The alliance further stated: "We would like to emphasize a truth once again: a democratic regime and a normalization of social relations are not possible without resolving the Kurdish question. The precondition for Ankara's democratization is the liberation of Amed (Diyarbakir). A democratic and peaceful politics would ensure this. Therefore, we will continue to maintain the sense of democratic struggle and defend the interests of our people against all oppression and campaigns seeking to discredit and ignore us. Our people deserve to live in peace, equality, freedom and prosperity. We are making efforts to achieve it. One of the most important steps to achieve it is to put an end to the current arbitrary and bizarre presidential system.

As the Kurdish Freedom and Democracy Alliance, we believe in the power of democratic politics and insist on our desire to live under free and democratic conditions. We declare that we will support Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu for the creation of a political ground where the Kurdish people will enjoy their rights, where

all problems will be discussed freely, and for the normalization of the political process. The second round of the presidential election is a historic opportunity that may put an end to the oppressive and marginalizing one-man regime. We urge our people to take a stand in favour of democracy and change in this historic election.”

### ‘Let’s ensure election safety’

The statement continued: “In order to win and succeed, we call on our people, especially all Kurdish youth, women and men, to go to the polls and to watch over the ballot boxes. Going to the polls offers an important opportunity for our people to solve their problems. Let's go to the polls for a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish question, to prevent the appointment of trustees to Kurdish municipalities, to put an end to poverty, to oppose war and policies of violence, to offer women an equal and free life and a secure future for youth. Let’s vote in favour of change and democracy. Protecting the ballot boxes is protecting our future.”



## Voting abroad ends today

ANF | BERN | 24 MAY 2023

Voting abroad for the second round of the Presidential elections to be held on 28 May in Turkey left behind the 4th day. In this second round, more participation was observed compared to the 14 May elections. Today is the last day to vote.

In Switzerland, 61,866 voters have voted so far in the 31 ballot boxes in polling stations established in the cities of Zurich, Bern and Geneva. Registered voters in Switzerland were 105,820. There has been an increase in voters in the second round, because on the 4th day of the first round, on 14 May, 60,047 people had voted.

The Green Left Party Election Coordination and the Swiss Alevi Unions Federation continue to help voters with transport and other issues. Since the beginning of the voting process on 20 May, buses have been departing from Basel to Zurich.

### Last stop to overthrow Erdoğan

The turnout among young voters has been high. Şevger Türk, who lives in the capital Bern, is one of these young people. Şevger, who could not vote in the first round because he was ill, stated that everyone should cast their vote and added: "This is the last stop to overthrow Erdoğan. We have one last chance. We have one vote. We must realize that if we do not cast that vote we will regret it. I call on all young people to come to the polls no matter what. Not only the Kurdish people, but also the Turkish people, socialists, all segments should come and cast their vote. They must do this for the future of Turkey, for the future of our children, for a democratic country, for the future and freedom of the Kurds. I have a call to Kurdish youths: they should never lose hope. Our hope is not just the ballot box. It is a tool. I urge you to vote for Kılıçdaroğlu against Erdoğan.”

## Voting ends at 10pm

Rabia Baldemir, an observer of the Green Left Party in Bern, stated that the turnout was high and emphasized that those who want to hold this government accountable should vote. “There is only one day left until the end of the election. We have a call for everyone, and especially women. Let’s not forget all the women murdered under this government. Let’s not forget that this government withdrew from the Istanbul Convention.”

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## Esengül Demir: Let’s stop the one-man regime with strong participation

ANF | ISTANBUL | 25 MAY 2023

Peoples’ Democratic Congress (HDK) co-Spokesperson Esengül Demir told ANF that 8 million voters did not go to the polls in the first round of the elections. Yet, results showed that half of society is in favor of change.

Demir stated that despite the polarization, marginalization and segregation created by the government in society, nearly 50 percent of the people's attitude is in favor of change. She said: “Despite all the manipulations in this election process, our people have shown their desire for a new Turkey, a new promising period for the younger generations, for different segments of society, for everyone. A period in which the core of this change will be laid for a new future.”

## Those who didn’t vote on 14 May should go on 28

Demir underlined that there was a high turnout on 14 May, but more than 8 million voters did not go to the polls. “Therefore, - she said - we expect those in society who have put such a barrier against fascism on 14 May, to completely stop fascism on Sunday. Our only wish is for the voters who did not go to the polls to go to and cast their vote and show the power to overthrow this one-man regime.”

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## HDP and Green Left Party: We will go to the polls and change the one-man regime

ANF | ANKARA | 25 MAY 2023

In a press conference on Thursday, the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) and the Green Left Party announced their stand regarding the run-off election for presidency in Turkey, which is set to take place on

Sunday, May 28. The press conference in Ankara, held after a meeting of the executive committees of the two parties, was attended by HDP co-chairs Pervin Buldan and Mithat Sancar and Green Left Party co-spokespersons Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar and Ibrahim Akın.

**“The run-off election has the character of a referendum”**

“We will go to the polls together in the second round of the elections and change the one-man regime,” Buldan said, explaining that the outcome would shape the years to come.

“We are dealing with a totalitarian understanding and structure based on absolute power, which has built a system based on one man for 21 years. Therefore, the election on 28 May has the character of a referendum between those who are for a democratic change of the system and those who want to maintain this monist regime. Let us first state that we do not approve of any political understanding that breaks, exploits, weakens or distracts the resistance to democratic change in society. We will continue our democratic struggle against such approaches to the end,” Buldan said.

**“We will continue our struggle for a common and equal future”**

Referring to the protocol signed yesterday between the nationalist Victory Party (Zafer Partisi) and the Nation's Alliance candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP), Buldan said: “The main goal of our struggle and Third Way politics is to bring the system to a universal standard that prioritises citizens' rights and freedoms, social justice and democracy, and to prevent a handful of profiteers from usurping the opportunities of the state and society. The only thing that makes us uncompromising and unyielding is this demand and the need of the oppressed people. We strongly emphasize that those who pawn the political will of the Kurds through the trustees are also those who pawn the rights and freedoms of all the peoples of Turkey. It is not in the interest of society that the Kurdish question remains unresolved. The Republic will not be able to integrate into democracy as long as this unsolvable game is not broken.

At the beginning of the second century of the Republic, we will put the will of the people above any other will, whatever the circumstances. We will continue our struggle for a common and equal democratic future. It must be emphasised once again that it is wrong and inhumane to instrumentalise migrants or refugees for political interests. It is not these people who are responsible for the current situation, but the government, which insists on a policy of war and instrumentalises flight and migration for economic and political purposes. The refugee and migrant problem can only be solved by waging a strong peace struggle against the war policy.”

**“The only option is to change the Erdogan regime”**

Pervin Buldan continued: “We would like to emphasise that no political calculation and interests can be more valuable than the future of the poor, labouring peoples, women and youth. We know that only the principles of democracy, law and freedom can stand against the policies of the People's Alliance [alliance of the ruling AKP party with nationalist and Islamist parties]. We would like to take this opportunity to once again present to the public the stance of the HDP and the Green Left Party, which have no other concerns than the common interests of society and its democratic, equal and free future, and which have no secret deals or conditions on their agenda. We, the HDP and the Green Left Party, stand solely for the people's struggle for equality, justice, law and freedom; these values are our only criterion, our unwavering commit-



ment. We repeat our pledge that we will not deviate from this stance under any circumstances. The current freak regime created by Erdoğan and his partners is the cause of the social problems. The elections on 28 May will vote on whether this irrational regime will continue or not. In the 14 May elections, there was strong support for the demand for democratic change and prosperity, and this demand was reflected at the ballot box. Millions of votes against the current system represent the demand for more freedom, more democracy and more prosperity. The goal is to build a free, democratic and just system without discrimination, where people can participate in government.

Once again, it is evident that the Erdoğan regime cannot fulfil these expectations and demands. The biggest obstacle to the realisation of these demands will continue to be Erdoğan and this regime itself. Therefore, Erdoğan is never an option for us, and the only option is to change him and the power he represents. For this reason, we reiterate that the recognition of the democratic ballot of the Kurdish people and the society of Turkey as a whole and their expectations and longing for democracy, law, justice, equality and freedom is of utmost importance and priority for us. On 28 May, together with millions of people, we express the hope that we can succeed and together turn the course of history towards democratic change. We believe it, and so do you. We will go to the polls in full force, and together we will change the one-man regime. Our own strength and the desire of millions of people for change is our greatest source of inspiration. We will continue our struggle persistently and tenaciously. We will never, never give up. We will definitely, definitely win.”

### **Ucar: Our vote for democracy, change and transformation**

The Green Left Party co-spokespersons Çiğdem Kılıçgün Uçar and İbrahim Akın expressed similar sentiments.

“With the decision we made in the first and second round of elections, our party has declared that it will vote for change, transformation and democracy. In doing so, it has insisted on and defended its principled stance, which did not require protocols and negotiations, from the very beginning. More than half of the voters who went to the polls in Turkey defended and voted for change, transformation and democracy. The HDP and the Green Left Party are the lifeblood of this demand for change and democracy. We have fought a great battle with the strength we have received from our peoples, and we will continue to do so. We were the answer to the politics of trustees yesterday and we will be the answer to the new trustee discussions today. We will cleanse politics in Turkey of chauvinist and nationalist language, because it does not correspond to the reality of society and peoples. This is our call to the people: our absolute priority is to end this pharaonic system, the one-man regime, the anti-women regime. The election we are facing is not a choice between Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu. This election is our election. Our vote is once again in favour of democracy, change and transformation.”

# Opinion

## What should we do now?

YENİ ÖZGÜR POLİTİKA | SELAHATTİN ERDEM | 24 MAY 2023

There are serious threats against the Kurdish people and a dangerous process. It is possible that new attacks against the Kurds may emerge. Therefore, it is necessary to be prepared to develop resistance against all kinds of attacks.

Three main alliances entered the 14 May elections in Turkey. They are called the 'Labour and Freedom Alliance', the 'Nation Alliance' and the 'People's Alliance'. Of course, there were no fair and equal elections on 14 May and the voting took place in an environment of serious pressure and fraud.

The political map revealed by the parliamentary election outcome showed that there are three basic political tendencies in Turkey. In the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts and in the largest cities, the Nation Alliance, which promotes a 'European democracy', received the most votes. In North Kurdistan, the Labour and Freedom Alliance, more specifically the Green Left Party, which aims to democratize Turkey based on the freedom of the Kurds, won the elections. In the rest of the country, the fascist, colonialist and genocidal People's Alliance came in first.

As a result, the People's Alliance won the majority in the parliament after the 14 May elections which were marked by a government crackdown and election fraud. Thus, in the upcoming period, the laws and bills in the parliament will be made by the People's Alliance. Moreover, the presidential system created by Tayyip Erdoğan and Devlet Bahçeli will continue. If Erdoğan is elected president in the 28 May election, he will form a new government. In other words, the Erdoğan Government and the People's Alliance will rule the Kurds as well as the whole of Turkey in the post-election period.

However, over 60 percent of the Kurds voted for the Green Left Party in the parliamentary elections. Over 70 percent of them voted for the Nation's Alliance's presidential candidate, Kılıçdaroğlu. A very large majority rejected the People's Alliance and Erdoğan. What will happen now in the face of such an obvious vote? It is certain that in the coming months and years, the People's Alliance and Erdoğan, who were rejected by 70 percent of the Kurds, will rule the Kurds! So, is this acceptable? Would the Kurds accept being governed under the rule of Erdoğan and the People's Alliance, which they rejected with their votes? Can the Kurds be blamed if they do not want to be governed under an administration that they voted to overthrow? What would the states that have put the Kurds under the domination of Turkish governments for a hundred years, approved and supported all kinds of massacres and genocides against the Kurds, say about this situation?

It is certain that the voters who voted for the Nation Alliance can live under the rule of Erdoğan and the People's Alliance, even if they are reluctant and have some objections to doing so. As a matter of fact, there are no serious ideological differences between them. But the Kurds who voted for the Green Left Party can

never accept to live under such an administration. They would oppose and fight this government on behalf of freedom and democracy. If they do so, can the Kurds be blamed? Obviously, they cannot be blamed.

So, what should we do now? First, the Kurdish people and their democratic political institutions must openly declare to the public that they will not accept such an anti-Kurdish government in any way. Without any political apathy, we must organize and join forces in order to develop the struggle for freedom and democracy against the AKP-MHP fascist dictatorship in a stronger way in every field. In short, we must prepare for a much stronger antifascist struggle. In addition, we should use every opportunity to criticize the states that established this genocidal system a century ago and make efforts to stop them from endorsing the Kurdish genocide.

Undoubtedly, these are long-term and key objectives. But there is another thing we can do before achieving them. We must make Erdoğan lose the election on 28 May by paying more attention to the second-round voting and working with a more effective mobilization. We must overthrow the fascist dictatorship of Erdoğan by completing the election success we, as the Kurdish people, enjoyed in the first round of the presidential elections.

Undoubtedly, a Kılıçdaroğlu victory may not pave the way to democratization. However, Erdoğan's defeat would bring much in terms of developing an anti-fascist democracy struggle. This means that it is necessary to mobilize for the 28 May election and to work for Kılıçdaroğlu in order to make Erdoğan lose rather than to elect Kılıçdaroğlu.

Because after the 14 May election result, who will win the presidential election has become much more important. In a parliament where the People's Alliance has the majority, who will be the next president is very important. If Erdoğan becomes president again, this will certainly lead to a more severe attack and massacre on the Kurds. Heavy oppression, persecution, terror, massacre and genocide in the last eight years will continue and increase. Kılıçdaroğlu's presidency will somewhat balance the fascist majority in the parliament and will not allow the fascist-genocidal massacres to develop further, although he cannot do anything serious to change the regime.

Therefore, the 28 May election is more important than the 14 May election. We need to see this and act accordingly. In order to overthrow the fascist Erdoğan dictatorship and create a more favourable ground for the struggle for democracy, we must take care of the 28 May election and defeat Erdoğan. The future of Kurdish freedom and democratization of Turkey depend on this outcome.

It is obvious that the effects of Erdoğan's victory will not be limited to North Kurdistan. Even before the 28 May elections, the Iraqi army moved into action and besieged the Maxmur Refugee Camp, one of the most important centres of Kurdish patriotism. It is indisputable that this attack was carried out in consequence of the pressures and demands of the AKP-MHP fascist-genocidal administration. It seems that if Erdoğan becomes president, the attacks on Bashur (South) and Rojava Kurdistan will be further escalated. Not only the fascist AKP-MHP administration, but also the Iraqi and Syrian governments will have to escalate tensions as a result of Turkish pressure. Like the Iraqi administration, the Syrian administration will be able to launch an attack against North-East Syria, especially by relying on its recent reconciliation with the Arab League.

It is obvious that there are serious threats against the Kurdish people and a dangerous process. It is possible that new attacks against the Kurds may emerge. Therefore, it is necessary to be prepared to develop freedom resistance against all kinds of attacks. Because the only way for the Kurds to exist and live freely is to resist and remove genocidal attacks. It is impossible for the Kurds to maintain their freedom in any other way than resistance and victory.

We praise and celebrate the historic resistance of the Maxmur people, especially their women and youth, against the Iraqi attacks. We want them to know that they are not alone, and all Kurdish people stand by them. We wish them to believe wholeheartedly that they will win by resisting and to continue this historic resistance for humanity and freedom until the end.



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