

# THE IMRALI POST

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

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# Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan

## Lawyer Yürekli: The experiment of Imrali prison

ANF | STRASBOURG | 14 JUNE 2023

Lawyer Cengiz Yürekli from the Asrın Law Office spoke at the conference “Rights and Freedoms in Turkey: Law, Prisons and the Kurdish Issue” organized by the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDHR) and the Association for Democracy and International Law (MAF-DAD).

Lawyer Yürekli spoke about isolation and the situation in prisons over the Imrali experience.

This is the text of his speech:

“The status of İmralı Prison and the legal regime imposed upon Mr. Öcalan necessitates in-depth discussion and new conceptualisation. The notions of “enemy criminal law” and the “state of exception”, which are used to describe the irregular and anomalous application of the law, in my eyes, do not correspond to the situation in İmralı Prison. For, in both instances, the discriminatory application or the suspension of law occurs based on a legal norm. Not so in the case of İmralı Prison and Mr. Öcalan. Theoretically speaking, both are subject to the same laws governing the rest of the country. In practice, however, these laws fail to get through to İmralı Prison. In this respect, we cannot actually define İmralı as a prison. Prisons are defined by laws which determine their architectural structure, the rights of prisoners, how the latter can exercise these rights, and under which circumstances these rights may be restricted. Not so in the case of İmralı Prison. The practices in this prison, though authorized by the state, do not meet the legal criteria to qualify as deprivation of liberty. In fact, they are closer to the crime of “false imprisonment” as specified in domestic penal law.

İmralı Prison was established in 1999, specifically for Mr. Öcalan. It is located on an island which was subsequently declared a restricted military area. Visits, correspondence, and all similar matters are subject to a regime and permission procedure that are not anchored in the legislation. For 10 years and 9 months, Öcalan was the only prisoner in İmralı. He was entitled to only one hour a day of access to fresh air and had only a single-channel radio. During this time, he had no other prisoners to contact, no television. Then, other convicts were transferred to İmralı Prison. Today, there are four of them in total. According to the data of the CPT, they are allowed to come together five hours a week, one hour a day. The rest of the time, that is, 23 hours a day on weekdays and the entire weekends, they spend completely alone in their cells.

Unfortunately, we cannot present any more detailed information on their current living conditions in the prison, since we are being prevented from seeing them and from monitoring the conditions of execution. We have no way of knowing which rights they enjoy and to what extent. There is no monitoring mechanism that monitors İmralı Prison and shares its findings with the public. According to national legislation, there is more than one institution tasked with such a function. However, there has not been a single visit or inspection in 24 years. Time and again, independent delegations have requested the authorities to be granted permission to visit the prison, but these requests were invariably denied. Therefore, the only and most recent data we have available is the CPT’s report on its visit to the prison in 2019. The last time we heard from our clients in İmralı Prison was during a phone call on 25 March 2021. For the 27 months that have passed since then, we have not been able to access any information on their situation.

For a better understanding of the conditions of detention in İmralı Prison, we may compare the rights defined in national legislation with the practice imposed on our clients. Mr. Veysi Aktaş, unlike our other clients, serves a life sentence in İmralı Prison. He has been held in the prison since March 2015. Convicts with his status have the right to receive visits from family members once a week and four times a month, plus the same number of phone calls. Roughly estimated, this means that they can see their families more than 50 times a year, and also contact them by telephone more than 50 times a year. These amounts are reduced to half when it comes to convicts serving an aggravated life sentence, which is the case for our three other clients in İmralı Prison. Accordingly, Veysi Aktaş should have had 400 family visits and as many phone calls with family members during his past eight years in İmralı. Our other clients should have been able to receive 200 visits and make just as many phone calls. However, during this period, Veysi Aktaş only

received three physical visits, and was allowed to make a phone call only once, due to the pandemic. His contact with his family amounts to a total of three hours. In more than eight years, this is all the contact he has been allowed with the outside world. Although his lawyers and he himself persistently file their requests with the authorities, he has not been allowed to see a lawyer so far.

In line with the measures introduced in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which were continued for two years, prisoners across Turkey were granted double the amount of telephone rights. But even during these times of great anxiety and uncertainty, our clients in İmralı Prison were not granted this right. After a devastating earthquake hit Turkey and Syria on 6 February 2023, prisoners whose families were living in the earthquake zone were granted the right to contact them via phone by a decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, this right was not granted to the prisoners in İmralı Prison even though all of them had family members residing in the earthquake zone. As a result, our clients do not have the slightest information as to whether any of their family members got sick or injured or even lost their lives during the pandemic and earthquake. According to national legislation, prisoners are allowed to make phone calls with their families in case of serious illness of relatives of a certain degree. In case of the death of such a relative, the prisoner is allowed to participate in the funeral and condolence procedures. Veysi Aktaş was not even granted the right to use the telephone when his father passed away in November 2022. Unless the prison administration showed the courtesy to inform him, Aktaş does not even know about his father's death. Furthermore, we and his family have no information about his health, living conditions and safety. We assume that our clients are being held in İmralı, that they are in good mental and physical condition, that they are not subjected to any ill-treatment, and that they are allowed to interact with each other. Or rather, we would like to believe and sincerely hope that this is the case.

Although we have requested their medical records before, they have not been given us. The privacy of the right to health does not prevent the records from being handed to us. If a person so wishes, these records must be given to his or her lawyers or guardians. Meanwhile, independent health committees are also denied access to the prison, so that we have no information about changes in our clients' health status.

Our clients are subjected to disciplinary penalties that prevent family visits and ban lawyer visits. These penalties are the official reason cited for our clients' incommunicado detention. However, there is no basis in the legislation to prevent a convict's contact with a lawyer or to completely cut off his or her contact with the outside world. On the contrary, there are legal safeguards intended to prevent such a situation from occurring. We, as our clients' authorized representatives, are not allowed to pursue the related proceedings on their behalf, and are not even given copies of the files and judgements. Our clients' legal personality, their legal existence, is thus completely annihilated.

This state of affairs is not limited to İmralı but tends to spread throughout the country. Over time, arrangements were made to create a legal basis for the conditions prevailing in İmralı Prison since 1999. Öcalan therefore plays a decisive role in the shaping and implementation of the law on penal execution in Turkey. The arrangements made to prevent Öcalan from exercising his rights have started to encompass domestic law in its entirety, where they are widely applied today.

Following numerous unsuccessful attempts throughout the 90s, the F-type prison system could only be introduced in the wake of the political and social changes brought about by the Öcalan's extradition to Turkey. The existence of a place like İmralı Prison, that is, a place of confinement for one single person targeted to completely isolate that individual from society, not only provided legal legitimacy for the opera-

tion of F-type prisons, but also had an impact on breaking the resistance of opposing social forces. The construction of F-type prisons meant the generalization of a system of relative isolation. Once this system had been consolidated, this was followed by the development of the so-called S and Y prison systems, which further aggravated the degree of social isolation.

The ECtHR ruled that Öcalan had not received a fair trial and that his right to defence had been violated and that he should therefore be retried. In the presence of such a judgement, domestic courts have no discretion to decide whether or not they accept that a reason for retrial exists. The ECtHR's judgement is final and, as such, is not open to interpretation. Despite this, in 2006 the relevant courts refused to fulfil the requirements of the ECtHR judgement on the grounds that the procedural errors, i.e., the violations found by the ECtHR, did not affect the applicant's sentence because the latter would have been the same even without them. Unfortunately, the Committee of Ministers approved this practice of the Turkish government and closed the file. In order to avoid any loophole, an article was added to the Code of Criminal Procedure to prevent Öcalan's retrial. This came with the implication that, according to Ministry of Justice data from that time, 221 people were exempted from their right to retrial. As the Council of Europe kept mounting pressure on Turkey, steps were taken to resolve this issue through a legal amendment in 2013, meanwhile excluding Öcalan. However, this compromise led the government to act arbitrarily in the following periods, at times almost blackmailing the Council. Turkey's refusal to implement the ECtHR's much-mentioned judgments on the cases of Osman Kavala and Selahattin Demirtaş is precisely the product and continuation of this complicit relationship.

The legal arrangements made specifically to prevent Mr. Öcalan's contact with his lawyers, have over time evolved into a threat to the rights of all prisoners to see a lawyer. The regulation, which was introduced with the 2005 reforms to legalise the practice in İmralı, has been implemented in all prisons at the investigation and prosecution stages after 20 July 2016. The ECtHR contributed to this state of affairs with its 2014 judgment on Öcalan's application, in which it ignored this issue. Now, the ECtHR is trying to overcome this by holding Turkey responsible of violations in individual cases.

Similarly, the aggravated life sentence, defined as imprisonment until death by the 2005 laws, was introduced with Öcalan in mind. However, many prisoners are currently being held in this status, deprived of the most basic rights. This status not only abolished conditional release, but also caused a drastic change in the conditions of penal execution. Prisoners were taken from the wards where they had stayed for years and put in solitary cells. Family visit rights, the number of people they are allowed to meet, telephone rights, outdoor times, and common activities were all reduced to an absolute minimum, subjecting prisoners to a tremendous degree of social isolation.

As these examples point out, the fact that violations were passed over in silence or internalised because they "only" concerned Öcalan has led to the result that people in Turkey, especially prisoners, today face an oppressive understanding of law. First, an exceptional practice was pursued in respect of Öcalan. It was only after the fact that legal processes were tailored to the person to correspond to the new reality and lend it a veneer of legitimacy. Since 1999, the course of criminal law regulations, especially regarding penal execution and trial, has been based on this fiction."

## Beirut workshop calls for action to ensure Öcalan's freedom

ANF | BEIRUT | 14 JUNE 2023

A workshop kicked off in Beirut on June 13 to discuss the International Conspiracy against Kurdish leader Öcalan, the global crisis and its effects, the role of a democratic nation and women, and joint working methods for the realization of democratic confederalism in the Middle East.

The workshop is organized under the motto “Road to peace, Together for a democratic Middle East”. More than 80 lawyers, politicians and intellectuals from 10 countries in the Middle East and the world, including Lebanon, Iraq, Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, South Africa, Iran, Turkey, North and East Syria and Kurdistan are participating in the workshop.

The workshop is organized by the Lebanese Continual Federal Congress, the Newroz Cultural Association and the Multicultural East Platform in cooperation with Demokrata Novu Orao Seclorum and RESILIENT BEIRUT.

Silêman Îlyas, director of the Fırat Research Centre, drew attention to the economic problems in the region in the first session. He underlined that the global regime has entered a crisis in all areas, saying: “The whole world is facing the effects of the economic crisis that started at the end of 2008. The debt crisis in the economies of European countries threatens the European Union. The fate of the dollar is not clear. It lost its value with the economic downturn of the USA.”

Former Lebanese Minister Yûsif Selamê remarked that the Saudi-Iranian agreement led to peace in the Middle East. He said: “There is a blind loyalty in Lebanon. The leaders here entered into a competition for the approval of Western powers and Arab countries. This is an incurable disease and a blow to Lebanese authority.”

Democratic Union Party (PYD) Executive Board member Foza Yûsif underlined that the current administrations in the Middle East had a religious and sexist mentality. In reference to the international conspiracy against Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, Yûsif said: “Those who can lead are targeted, just like leaving a body without a head.”

Kamil Alfred Shamûn, President of the Colourful Oriental Forum, said that the main reason for the conflicts and sectarian problems in the streets of Lebanon was the current government. He said: “For example, if a sports team from a different sect is successful, counter demonstrations begin immediately in Lebanon.”

Referring to the television channels that control the thoughts of people, Lebanese journalist Michael Muhanna said: “These are party channels that control the brains of sectarian citizens. More dangerously, there are religious channels. The news of the parties is religious, as if they dropped out of the sky and no one could deny it. There are also media outlets that make propaganda and broadcast somewhat neutral news. There should be media awareness and individual awareness.”

In the second session titled “Government of the People and Obstacles in front of it” and presided by Nicola Namiq, the International Conspiracy against Öcalan and its causes, the current situation of

Öcalan, the torture system in İmralı where Öcalan is held and the struggle to defeat the conspiracy were discussed.

In the second session, Cairo University Political Sciences Lecturer Dr. Ferînaz Etiyê, one of the lawyers of Öcalan, Mazlum Dinç, and South African international law professor Mahmud Batil made presentations.

Dr. Ferînaz Etiyê said that what was interesting in the conspiracy was that the states that contributed to the conspiracy agreed on the abduction of Öcalan and his handover to the Turkish state, despite their ideological differences.

Etiyê underlined that the Turkish state deprived Öcalan of his basic rights, adding: “One of the reasons for Öcalan's abduction was his views. Western countries with racist motives were disturbed by his ideas.”

Remarking that the abduction of Öcalan fuelled tension and racism, Etiyê said: “We see this in northern Syria, Turkey and Iran. The Kurds are attacked and accused of terrorism in these regions. As a result, western states are working to divide the Middle East in cooperation with regional states.”

Etiyê called for the establishment of relations with the Kurds, saying that there are common interests between the Arabs and the Kurds.

Lawyer Mazlum Dinç emphasized that there were many laws that respect human rights in Turkey, but there was hypocrisy when it came to Öcalan and the Kurds.

Dinç pointed out that: “Freedom, peace and equal life are not possible without Öcalan's project. The Turkish state attacked and jailed Öcalan since it regarded his project as a threat. The conspiracy still continues, and has turned into isolation in İmralı where he is held.”

Dinç noted that Öcalan was constantly subjected to disciplinary punishments and his trial was not fair and unlawful, adding that all the five prisoners in İmralı were not allowed to meet with their families and lawyers. He added: “The Turkish state does not allow us to visit İmralı, violating all international laws. The last information we received from Öcalan was more than two and a half years ago. He spoke to his brother in a short phone call, and we have not heard from him since.”

After lawyer Dinç's speech, international law professor Mahmud Batil from South Africa delivered a speech.

Batil said that the existing international laws were brutal and thus there was a need for a federal law and a free system to protect Öcalan and all the oppressed. Batil continued: “We are all responsible for ensuring Öcalan's freedom. We must raise our voices and work together against oppression.”

Batil called for support for the Kurdish leader and all political prisoners.

The workshop will continue with two new sessions and suggestions today. A final declaration will be announced at the end of the workshop.

## Workshop in Lebanon: Solution to crises lies in Abdullah Öcalan's proposals

ANF | BEIRUT | 14 JUNE 2023

The third session of the workshop today was moderated by Kurdish journalist Xazne Nebi from North-East Syria. The opening speech was made by Selwe Qiqe Bin Afiye, member of the African Women's Union and Committee for Security and Peace, who spoke about Öcalan's perspective and philosophy of women, equality and freedom.

Selwe defined Öcalan as "a great theoretician with a strategic vision towards the region's realities and practical proposals".

Remarking that it was time to make arrangements according to the requirements of the age, Selwe said: "Where do we stand in terms of the practice of democracy and gender equality? Where do we stand in terms of diversity and freedom of thought? We must ask these very questions."

Academic Dr. Hesên El İsa from the University of Şerq in Raqqa pointed to Abdullah Öcalan's "Democratic Nation" philosophy, which criticizes the state's nationalist colour.

El İsa said: "Leader Öcalan examines the system and its institutions, and their primary missions. According to his perspective, their mission is to get organized but they failed to do so and became tyrant administrators."

Kurdish politician Mizgîn Mugiriyan from East Kurdistan highlighted the importance of re-gaining women's leading role in society and cited the women-led uprising in Iran and East Kurdistan. Remarking that women should organize themselves according to the changes in the world, Mizgin pointed out women's capability to achieve anything with commitment and determination. She noted that women's organizations could be utilized to achieve rights and other gains.

Speaking after, Rihan Loqo, spokesperson of the women's umbrella organization in North-East Syria, Kongra Star, stated that the first revolution in human history was led by women. She also talked about the concept of Jineology (Women's Science) which was presented by Abdullah Öcalan in 2008.

"Abdullah Öcalan taught us to demand freedom for women. While dealing with the equality of women and men, he was the first one to bring up the idea of empowering women and stopping violence against women," Rihan Loqo said.

The workshop continues with the fourth session titled "Towards a Democratic Middle East", discussing the common strategy for the construction of a democratic Middle East, joint efforts to introduce a democratic confederation in the Middle East, and solution methods for the refugee problem in the region, especially in Syria.



## Workshop “For the Democratic Middle East - The Road to Peace” issues final declaration

ANF | BEIRUT | 15 JUNE 2023

The two-day workshop “For the Democratic Middle East - The Road to Peace” in Beirut, ended with the reading of a final declaration.

Iraqi University Professor Seyf Ednan read the text which said that racism, religion, sect and women's trials were the main obstacles in the way of democratic transformation. The text emphasized that a different perspective is needed to overcome this situation and that the democratic nation project put forward by Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan is the basis of political, economic and social solutions.

The declaration called for the physical freedom of Öcalan, and added that energy, water and many political and cultural issues in the Middle East could be resolved with democratic confederalism, and that a common strategy should be established for this.

The text also drew attention to the problem of migration and refugees, stating that the only way to solve the migration problem is political and economic stability, that political conditions must be provided for the safe return of Syrians, and the responsibilities of the UN and the international community in this regard were pointed out.

The declaration stated that international pressure and support should be provided to end the isolation of Öcalan.

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## Prisons in Turkey

### Journalist Gök has letters seized and visits denied

ANF | 9 JUNE 2023

Abdurahman Gök was detained and arrested in an operation carried out in 21 cities on April 25 within the scope of the investigation carried out by the Diyarbakır Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.

The letter Gök, who is in Diyarbakır High Security Closed Prison No. 1, sent to journalist Hüseyin Aykol was seized by the Letter Reading Commission. In the letter the journalist talked about the pressures the judiciary has exerted on him since 2017 for photographing the murder of Kemal Kurkut by the police.

Gök's objection against the seizure of the letter by the Letter Reading Commission was rejected on the same day, on the grounds that "in his letter he accused the state of being a murderer".

Thereupon, Gök wrote a short letter to Hüseyin Aykol asking about his condition and left the rest of the letter blank, with the note "This letter will be completed when freedom of expression' is achieved" at the end of the second page.

The prison authorities also rejected a request Gök made to be visited by a friend.



## Court rejects requests for release of defendants in Kobanê Case

ANF | ANKARA | 10 JUNE 2023

The decision to reject the requests for release of the defendants in the Kobanê Case was taken on the 25th hearing. The trial is held at the Sincan Prison Campus and is against 108 people, including the former co-chairs of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and Central Executive Committee (MYK) members. 18 of the defendants are in prison.

The court, which unanimously rejected all the requests for the release of the imprisoned defendants and the removal of judicial control measures for some of those outside.

It also decided to write a warrant to the Parliament regarding the request for the abolition of the judicial control decision and the suspension of the trial, due to the election of Sırrı Süreyya Önder as a member of parliament for the 28th term.

The next hearing in the Kobanê Case will be held on 3 July.

### Background

The Kobanê Case was filed in 2020 against 108 people, including the HDP's former co-chairs, Mr Selahattin Demirtaş and Ms Figen Yüksekdağ, current co-chair Ms Pervin Buldan, several current and former HDP deputies and mayors, and all the members of the HDP's Central Executive Board of 2014. This case was launched as a counter move by the Turkish government just two weeks after the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights made its final judgment demanding immediate release of Selahattin Demirtaş. The indictment in the Kobani Case is based on a twitter message posted by the HDP on 6 October 2014. This called for democratic protests in solidarity with the people of Kobanî, a Kurdish town in Northern Syria that was fighting against the attacks of ISIS, and also against Turkey's embargo on the town. The prosecutor is calling for all the defendants to be given aggravated life sentences (without parole) 38 times for the crimes of "destroying the unity of the state and the integrity of the country" and "premeditated murder" for the people who lost their lives in the Kobanê protests. Seventeen politicians are currently being held in pre-trial detention for this case.

The Kobanê case is closely linked with the closure case filed against the HDP, for which it serves as a pretext. In the closure case, the prosecution is mainly based on the alleged role and responsibility of the HDP in the murders that occurred during the Kobani protests in 2014. We should stress that the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR has already examined these allegations in the case of Selahattin Demirtaş and concluded that neither Demirtaş nor the HDP had any responsibility for the murders.

In the first hearing of the case, the court board was changed before the hearing started. On the first day of the hearing, the court was filled with law enforcement officers, even in the sections reserved for lawyers. While the trial was pending, the president of the court was dismissed and put under house arrest on the grounds that he was a member of a criminal organization. The court has so far taken multiple decisions that directly violate, or even deny, the right to defense, and therefore the right to a fair trial. These unlawful decisions include the continuation of the hearings in two-week periods without a break, secret witness statements full of contradictions, and the limitation of the duration of the defense to one day for the defendants and their lawyers. The court decided to send the file to the prosecutor for his obiter dictum without even an interrogation of the defendants, including of the HDP's former co-chairs Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş.

The 24th hearing of the trial took place at the Ankara 22nd Heavy Penal Court on April 14. At this hearing, before the interrogations of the politicians on trial were completed, the court asked the prosecutor to submit his final opinion. In response to this situation, the politicians on trial left the courtroom together with their lawyers. The prosecutor read out loud the 5,000-page opinion against the defendants, which took eight hours. In his final opinion, the prosecutor has ignored all the evidence that was put in the file in favor of the politicians on trial. The prosecutor deliberately distorted the evidence in the file and openly declared that he had given a political opinion, ignoring all evidence for the defense. The prosecutor has sought aggravated life imprisonment for all politicians on trial, including former co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, over their alleged involvement in the 2014 Kobane protests. He has also demanded that arrest warrants be issued for 12 defendants who are standing trial without arrest and that the jailed politicians be kept imprisoned.

The next hearing is scheduled for 3 July 2023 for the defense against the final opinion of the prosecutor by the politicians on trial and their lawyers.

# Military aggression and occupation

## UN investigative team outlines findings around ISIS chemical weapons use

ANF | 9 JUNE 2023

Senior officials with the UN Investigative Team promoting accountability for ISIS crimes, UNITAD, presented some of their findings to Member States meeting at UN Headquarters in New York.

For the past five years, UNITAD has been gathering evidence of crimes committed during ISIS' self-proclaimed caliphate from June 2014 to December 2017, which could be used to prosecute the extremists in national or foreign courts.

Christian Ritscher, Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD, recalled that chemical weapons use is outlawed internationally and could constitute a crime against humanity, war crime or even contribute to genocide, if a specific group is targeted.

“To the best of my knowledge, the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors has rarely been adjudicated, if at all, in any court - whether national or international - around the world. As UNITAD, we would like to play our part and aim to change this,” he said.

The investigations into ISIS' development and use of chemical and biological weapons began two years ago, looking into the March 2016 attack on the town of Taza Khurmatu and whether other incidents had taken place elsewhere.

Team Leader Paula Silfverstolpe said ISIS' operations represent the culmination of nearly two decades of experimentation by Sunni jihadi groups, marking “the most sophisticated programme developed by non-State actors so far”.

The overall manufacturing of weapons and ammunition fell under ISIS' self-styled Department of Defence, specifically the Committee of Military Development and Manufacturing (CMDM), which had a monthly budget of over \$1 million as well as extra-budgetary funds to purchase raw materials.

More than 1,000 combatants were involved in production, according to ISIS payroll records.

Hundreds were deployed to the chemical weapons programme, and specific job advertisements were placed to recruit scientists and technical experts, including from abroad, drawing people from countries such as the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Belgium.

Specialist research and development teams were located at the then extremist-run University of Mosul in northern Iraq, rural parts of Anbar province, and the city of Hawija, home to ISIS headquarters.

Ms. Silfverstolpe said the militants developed at least eight chemical agents - aluminium phosphide, botulinum toxin, chlorine, cyanide ion, nicotine, ricin, thallium sulfate and sulfur mustard, which is also known as mustard gas.

ISIS was also the first non-State group to develop a banned chemical warfare agent and combine it with a projectile delivery system.

The toxins sulfur mustard, chlorine and aluminium phosphide are banned under the Biological Weapons Convention, and evidence demonstrates that ISIS weaponized their use in mortars, rockets and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The terror group also explored the possibility of acquiring anthrax but there has been no evidence so far that combatants used it, or other biological agents, in any attacks, although investigations continue.

UNITAD has also collected evidence which indicates that ISIS tested chemical agents on humans - including ricin, nicotine and thallium sulfate - as well as animals such as rabbits.

ISIS records demonstrate that top leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who died in 2019, authorized the use of chemical weapons by troops and even approved bonus payments for those soldiers deploying them. "Martyrdom payments" were made if they died.

Al-Baghdadi also personally ordered the attack against Taza Khurmatu "with the purpose of causing as many casualties as possible". Of the 42 projectiles launched against the town, at least 27 contained sulfur mustard, which causes blisters and painful burns. Two children died and thousands of people, including first responders, were injured.

Judge Ali Noaman Jabbar of the Taza Investigation Court said the re-opening of the case and UNITAD's interest has motivated numerous victims and their families to provide their testimonies.

"The impact caused by the chemical attack includes various diseases such as cancer, skin diseases, miscarriages, deformities in embryos, chronic diseases, and psychological impact and trauma," he said in a video message.

The attack on Taza Khurmatu "was definitely not an isolated case", according to Ms. Silfverstolpe. Information shows at least 12 other attacks were carried out in other locations, with unconfirmed reports of 35 more.

"It was quite a widespread and systematic phenomena, as far as the information that we have collected so far," she said.

UNITAD will continue to work with Iraq and other countries towards building cases in connection with 21 "persons of interest" suspected of involvement in the ISIS chemical weapons programme, who include foreign nationals.

While some are believed to be dead, others have been detained or are living in third countries.

Although the caliphate has been destroyed, Mr. Ritscher warned that the terrorism threat has not disappeared.

“We need to advance criminal accountability in relation to the use of chemical weapons in the name of victims and survivors of ISIS to promote peace and reconciliation in Iraq, but also because it is a responsibility of the entire international community, given that such threats and crimes may present themselves in other countries,” he said.



## Armed attack against a member of Mesopotamia Workers’ Association in Sulaymaniyah

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 9 JUNE 2023

A member of the Mesopotamia Workers’ Association was targeted by an armed attack in the city of Sulaymaniyah in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq). The victim was seriously injured and hospitalized.

The victim of the attack is Huseyin Arasan, a native of Mardin, who was born in Izmir in 1978. He had to leave Turkey due to political persecution and lived in Sulaymaniyah.

Arasan was hit by three bullets and hospitalized with serious injuries. The attack took place in front of the association building. No information on the perpetrator is available yet, and the authorities have not made any statements.

The Mesopotamia Workers’ Association is made up of people who are politically persecuted in Northern Kurdistan and have been recognized as refugees by the United Nations. Many of them have been in Turkish prison for years because their legal political activities have been criminalized by the judiciary, or they are currently facing long prison sentences on so-called terror charges.

Attacks against Kurdish activists and intellectuals continue increasingly in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The Turkish intelligence service MIT and Parastin, the intelligence service of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), are held responsible for the attacks. The target of the attacks are mainly Kurds who have come to southern Kurdistan because of political persecution in Turkey.

Since September 2021, five people have been murdered in targeted attacks. Most recently, Huseyin Türeli was shot dead in a shopping centre in Duhok on 18 April. Jineology (Women’s Science) activist Nagihan Akarsel was shot dead in the street in Sulaymaniyah on 4 October 2022. On 28 August 2022, the Turkish intelligence service MIT killed the author and historian Suheyl Xurşîd Ezîz, a member of the general assembly of the Tevgera Azadî (Freedom Movement), in front of his house in Kifri. On 17 May 2022, Zeki Çelebi was the victim of an armed attack in front of his restaurant in Sulaymaniyah and succumbed to his

injuries one day later. On 17 September 2021, a member of the Committee of the Families of Martyrs, Yasin Bulut (Şükrü Serhed), was murdered in Sulaymaniyah. The day before, Ferhad Bariş Kondu from southern Kurdistan was seriously injured in an armed attack in Sulaymaniyah.

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## Hüseyin Arasan, who was attacked in Sulaymaniyah on Friday, died this morning

ANF | SULAYMANIYAH | 10 JUNE 2023

Hüseyin Arasan, a member of the Mesopotamia Workers' Association, was attacked at around 10.30 am on Friday in the city of Sulaymaniyah in South Kurdistan.

Arasan, who was seriously injured in the attack that bear all the marks of previous killings by the Turkish state and KDP, died this morning.

Hüseyin Arasan's body was taken to the forensic morgue in Sulaymaniyah.

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## Explosion in MKE rocket and explosives factory in Ankara

ANF | ANKARA | 10 JUNE 2023

An explosion took place in the production section of the MKE rocket and explosives factory in the neighbourhood of Tatlıca in Ankara's Elmadağ district in the morning. Smoke rose from the factory.

According to some sources, there were dead and injured. A fire broke out after the explosion.

There was no information about the cause of the explosion.

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## Villages depopulated due to Turkish military occupation in southern Kurdistan

ANF | 10 JUNE 2023

The Turkish state continues to expand the military occupation in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq. In an article about the consequences for the local people in the mountainous Behdinan region, the Kurdish newspaper Hawlati, said: “Hundreds of villages in southern Kurdistan have been depopulated and occupied by the Turkish army, access is forbidden, roads have been closed.”

The article describes in particular the current situation in the town of Sheladize, which is located thirty kilometres away from the town of Amadiya in Duhok governorate. A large part of the villages are now empty due to the continued attacks by the Turkish army. According to Rizgar Übêd from the local administration, 85 villages have been completely depopulated. There is no life in these villages any more, and people from the surrounding area are forbidden to visit.

Nayif Siteyi from the village of Sire is quoted in the article as describing the empty villages as military camps and says that it is hardly possible to enter the surrounding terrain. Academic Dilşad Nesrullah, who also lives in Sire, says about the current situation: “The Turkish state has so far established about ten military bases in the mountains around Sheladize. The bases are located in the areas of Mam Reşo, Kêrya Dêrê, Serê Darê and Kelha Bêde. The Turkish state has deployed a large military contingent in the region.”

According to Nesrullah, an average of 50 to 75 families lived in each of the evacuated villages, who left the region due to the constant threat of attack and moved to localities such as Sheladize, Dêrelök, Sersing, Qediş, Amadiya and Duhok.



## International powers turn a blind eye to the ISIS issue

ANF | 10 JUNE 2023

The ministerial meeting of the International Coalition Against ISIS, consisting of 85 states and organizations, was held in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, on June 8. Foreign ministers of the member countries of the International Coalition also attended the meeting.

Although 9 years have passed since the establishment of the International Coalition, ISIS has not been eliminated completely. In a recent interview with Asharq Al-Awsat, the US Deputy Special Envoy for the International Coalition to Combat ISIS, Ian McCurry, denied that the war against the organization was over, even though it had become “more weak and scattered” than it was 5 or 10 years ago.



The Hol Refugee Camp, east of Heseke city, and the Roj Camp in Qamishlo, close to the Iraqi border, are the most dangerous camps in the world. After the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) managed to end ISIS' territorial rule on March 23, 2019, tens of thousands of families of the surrendered ISIS members were settled in these camps.

There are more than 54,390 Iraqi refugees and ISIS children and wives in the Hol camp. Despite the countless murders committed in the camp, ISIS families continue to maintain their extremist ideology.

### **“They are trying to build a state”**

Speaking to ANHA, a researcher on terror organizations and journalist Lamara Arkendi stated that the ISIS threat continued despite the group's weakening. Arkendi said: “All kinds of support are provided for ISIS to carry out its terrorist activities in the territories which formerly belonged to the Islamic state. The organization is trying to rebuild its state with this support.”

Arkendi insisted that the International Coalition should put more pressure on the governments and states from which ISIS mercenaries came and force them to ask for the extradition of their ISIS citizens and put them on trial.

Drawing attention to the dangers in the camps in North-East Syria, Arkendi said: “The international community or the governments of the countries where ISIS members came from have abandoned their citizens. But the greatest danger is that 60 or more children are born every month in the Hol refugee camp, yet there are no official documents regarding their identities. Those children are born with a fatwa issued by ISIS, which also legitimizes the marriage of 12-year-old children.”

Arkendi emphasized that many parties, including the Turkish state, benefited from the existence of ISIS.

### **‘International powers do not do their duties’**

Terrorism and international terrorist movements expert Munir Edib pointed out that the USA and its partners made a big mistake in the fight against ISIS. He said: “ISIS, which was established on June 29, 2014, could not be destroyed by air strikes. But it was defeated on March 23, 2019. It took five years to do that. For a very long time, the great powers could not destroy ISIS.”

“The ISIS threat is still there; it can still plan attacks in many places as it used to before,” he said.

Edib emphasized that although the coalition was formed 9 years ago, it did not fulfil its mission properly. He said: “They did not take sufficient steps to destroy ISIS due to different opinions or strategic goals. They were only carrying out air strikes, but there was no ground offensive.”

Edib remarked that the international community did not accept some refugees whose national identities were banned. He added: “Moreover, the USA did not have an international will to stop ISIS and destroy the camps that turned into ISIS strongholds. There are children in those camps, they have grown up as enemies of the state because they see themselves as prisoners.”

According to the data provided by the SDF, 19 thousand ISIS members are held in prisons in North and East Syria, of whom 7 thousand are foreign nationals, 12 thousand are Syrian and Iraqi nationals.

Edib said that some states wanted to cause confusion in other states by taking advantage of the political and economic presence of ISIS. He concluded: “Therefore, those states support ISIS. Now those states are known, so are their intentions. Their main goal is to establish a state for this organization. There are also states that support ISIS in order to take advantage of its existence. States that obtain oil products through smuggling are an example of this. ISIS is not over yet; it has been weakened, yet, it may revive again. Because the defeat of ISIS was geographical, they still maintain their extremist ideas and have a lot of supporters and fighters.”



## AANES to begin the trial of foreign ISIS members

ANF | 10 JUNE 2023

The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) announced its decision to begin the trial of over 10 thousand ISIS members.

AANES stated that their decision was made in consideration of the fact that their repeated appeals to the international community to bring the criminal ISIS mercenaries to justice have remained inconclusive.

The statement released by AANES on Saturday includes the following:

“Over the past years, the world has witnessed how the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) confronted and fought the terrorist organization ISIS in northern and eastern Syria, starting from Kobani to Al-Baghouz and passing through the capital of their alleged caliphate, Raqqa. ISIS, which represents the most dangerous international terrorist organization, committed the most heinous crimes and massacres against the people of the region.

Terrorists of more than 60 nationalities, who entered Syrian territory through Turkish territory with the support and supervision of the Ankara government, committed war crimes against humanity and are responsible for thousands of disappearances and the destruction of our cities and their infrastructure.

Our forces represented by the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) managed to defeat ISIS geographically with the support of the Global Coalition to Fight DAESH (ISIS), during which we made great sacrifices, which cost 15,000 martyrs and more than 25,000 wounded.

In the last stronghold of ISIS, in Al-Baghouz, more than ten thousand dangerous fighters from the organization were arrested, and they are now in the detention centers of the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria. In addition to that is the presence of tens of thousands of their family members, most of whom are children and women, who are now residing in the camps of northern and eastern Syria.

Since the first days of the end of the Al-Baghouz battle and its aftermath, the Autonomous Administration has repeatedly called on the international community to fulfill its responsibilities in finding solutions to the file of ISIS elements detained there. AANES put forward initiatives for all concerned countries and human rights and international organizations to form an international tribunal, or an international court, in order to try ISIS elements in accordance with the evidence and irrefutable documents available to the AANES institutions, and to sentence them for committing, along with their supporters, the most horrific terrorist crimes against the people and components of the region.

Today, despite the great challenges, the difficulty and sensitivity of the stage, the Autonomous Administration bears a great burden as a result of these criminals remaining in detention centers without any trial for the crimes they committed against innocent people. The conditions cannot stay as they are any longer.

The failure to bring these criminals to court and justice is contrary to international laws and agreements, in addition to increasing the danger of the security situation in the event that they remain in this situation.

Because of the failure of the international community to respond to the calls and appeals of the Autonomous Administration for home countries to repatriate their citizens, and in order to achieve social justice, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria decided to start to bring the detained ISIS foreigners to fair and transparent trial in accordance with international and local laws related to terrorism, and in a way that preserves the rights of the plaintiffs among the victims and members of their families.

This does not mean that the Autonomous Administration abandons its opinion on the need to establish an international tribunal, or an international court to deal with the file of ISIS terrorists.

We are still insisting on our request to the international community to respond to our demands for the formation of an international tribunal. In this context, we call on the International Coalition to Defeat ISIS, the United Nations, relevant international human rights organizations and local organizations to engage positively, be present and provide support during all stages of trials.”



## Turkish drone targets vehicle in Shehba, kills 3 YPG fighters

ANF | SHEHBA | 11 JUNE 2023

An armed unmanned aerial vehicle (SIHA) belonging to the Turkish state targeted a vehicle in the village of Maratê in the Ehdas district of Shehba.

The Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG) Press Center said in a statement that three of his fighters fell as martyrs and two were injured in the attack by the invading Turkish state in Ehdas.

The statement said: “At 4.45 pm on Saturday, the invading Turkish state attacked our forces in the Ehdas district of Aleppo using a reconnaissance plane. As a result of the attack, three of our fighters fell as martyrs and two others were injured. We will make a statement about our martyrs at a later stage.”

## Attacks continue in Afrin and Shehba

The Turkish state's attacks against Northern and Eastern Syria continue. The Turkish state bombed the village of Bêlûniyê in Shehba, the village of Shewarqa in Shera, and the village of Benê in Sherawa. All three are localities in the province of Afrin. As a result of artillery fire, the fields in Shewarqa went on fire.

Turkish state reconnaissance planes also continued to fly over Shehba and Afrin on Saturday.

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## Turkish army and mercenaries bomb villages in Afrin and Shehba

ANF | 11 JUNE 2023

According to the Rojava-based Hawar News Agency (ANHA), the Turkish army and allied mercenaries have launched a wave of attacks on the regions of Shehba and Afrin.

According to reports, the attacks are directed against the surroundings of the Til Rifet district and the village of Bêlûniyê in Shehba Canton.

Simultaneous attacks by the occupation forces target the villages of Merenazê, Şewarxa, Malîkiyê, Tat Meraş in Afrin's Shera district, and the village of Bêni in Sherawa district.

Over 100 mortar and howitzer shells were fired on the mentioned areas.

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## Turkish state bombs Til Rifet

ANF | QAMISHLO | 12 JUNE 2023

According to the information received, the Turkish state started bombing the Til Rifet area around 9am local time.

It was reported that warplanes were flying over the whole region while the bombing was carried out.

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## Russian military vehicle attacked in Shehba

ANF | SHEHBA | 12 JUNE 2023

According to reports from the ground, a Russian military vehicle was targeted by an attack in northern Syria.

The armored vehicle was targeted while on the move between the villages of Herbel and Um-Hosh in the Shehba Canton.

It was not immediately clear whether the car was the target of an airstrike or a landmine.

Local sources say that the Russian vehicle was targeted by the Turkish state forces. Unconfirmed reports are coming through of casualties, while details are not yet available.

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## HBDH militia claims responsibility for factory fire in Başakşehir

ANF | 12 JUNE 2023

The Hüseyin Arasan Militia of the Peoples' United Revolutionary Movement (HBDH) has claimed responsibility for a factory fire in Başakşehir/Organized industrial Site on June 10.

In a written statement on Monday, HBDH's Hüseyin Arasan Militia said: "The murderous and tormenting fascist state is laying ambushes and assassinating our people and their brave children. Just a few days ago, a brave son of our people, Hüseyin Arasan, was murdered in a cowardly attack in Sulaymaniyah. It is not possible for our working people to catch a break if this brutal, murderous state is not destroyed. Therefore, this capitalist exploitation and its fascist state will be targeted by us in every field."

The statement continued: "All the military, political, economic institutions of this order, state-sponsored crime rings, supporters of fascist power, fascist religious orders, economic resources... will be targeted by our militias. There will be no mercy for any of them from now on. They will live in fear of being hit by us anytime, anywhere.

We carried out a sabotage action against a fascist pro-government factory in Istanbul/İkitelli.

On June 10, at 17.30, a factory in Başakşehir/Organized Industrial Site was set on fire by our militia. While the products in the factory, which belonged to the active supporters of the fascist war economy, which exploits workers intensively, were destroyed completely, the factory was severely damaged.

The capitalist exploitation and its fascist state will be destroyed without fail. Our working people, who have suffered from all kinds of brutality and exploitation for a hundred years, will certainly obtain their freedom. We will never stop until victory!”

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## SDF refutes Turkish allegations about the killing of 12 fighters

ANF | 12 JUNE 2023

The Media Center of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) published a clarification on its Twitter account refuting the latest Turkish claims about the ongoing fighting in North-East Syria.

“According to the allegations of the Ministry of Defense of the Turkish occupation state, our forces carried out operations against their base west of the Euphrates on June 11, and 12 of our fighters were martyred in their response to these operations on June 11 and 12. This claim is not true,” said the post by SDF Media Center.

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## KCK calls off unilateral ceasefire

ANF | 13 JUNE 2023

In a statement on Tuesday, the KCK Executive Council Co-Presidency, emphasized that the attacks and killings by the Turkish state continued and the isolation of Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Öcalan was aggravated during the unilateral ceasefire declared on 6 February, after the earthquake that hit Kurdistan, Turkey and Syria.

Drawing attention to the murder of Hüseyin Arasan in Sulaymaniyah (Silêmanî), the statement said: “The AKP-MHP fascism has launched a new wave of attacks against our Movement and our people. Against this wave of fascist attacks, the need for active struggle has become inevitable. We declare that we have called off the unilateral ceasefire that we have taken as of today.”

The statement continued: “As is known, two major earthquakes occurred on February 6, 2023 with epicenters in Elbistan and Pazarcık. As a movement, after the seriousness of the earthquake’s impact became clear, we decided to stop any action until the humanitarian crisis was contained. We then publicly announced our decision, based on our humanitarian and moral responsibilities. We have called on all our forces, as well as the revolutionary-democratic forces beyond our structures, not to carry out any actions for this reason, especially in the cities. Our People’s Defense Forces responded to this appeal with a statement announcing that they ceased their actions and would not undertake any further actions beyond self-

defense during this period. The HPG and all military units associated with them have followed this decision of our movement.”

The statement continued: “While the heavy impact of the earthquake was still continuing, Turkey entered an election process. During this election, which was considered important by both the people of Kurdistan and the society in Turkey, we decided to extend our halt of all military attacks until the end of the elections in order to eliminate the grounds for provocations by the fascist AKP-MHP government and to thus ensure that the election leads to results in favor of the peoples and the democratic forces. We then again shared this decision with the public. Undoubtedly, as a movement, we advocate and struggle for the democratic political solution to the Kurdish question and the democratization of Turkey. In this respect, our decision constituted a clear support for politics and the political process.

Undoubtedly, our people, patriotic and democratic Kurdish organizations, many personalities, the democratic forces of Turkey, many powers and institutions from the region and the international arena and the democratic public saw our decision positively and supported it. However, the Turkish state and AKP-MHP government have nullified our decision by increasing the invasion and genocidal attacks. The fascist AKP-MHP government never stopped its attacks throughout this period of inaction and continued its attacks on guerrilla areas, and the use of banned weapons. Apart from the guerrilla areas, it continued to increase its attacks and killings against Kurds in South Kurdistan, Shengal, Maxmur and Rojava. It has also increased its attacks on the people and democratic politics in Turkey and Bakur Kurdistan. It continued the isolation of Leader Apo by aggravating it.

In short, the fascist AKP-MHP government has deepened its attacks against our Movement and our people within the scope of the concept of liquidation and genocide, further deepening the isolation of Leader Apo. Despite the increasing attacks by the Turkish army throughout this process of inaction, the guerrillas kept in line with the decision we took, but the increasing attacks by the AKP-MHP government rendered this decision meaningless.

The opposition in Turkey has not taken an approach that will respond to this decision, which means contributing to the humanitarian, conscientious and political process, and has not been able to show its difference from the government by maintaining its nationalist and narrow approach.

Despite this decision – taken as a requirement of our humanitarian and moral responsibility in order to prevent provocations during the election process and to contribute to the development of a political foundation – the attacks and massacres against our forces and our people have continued and increased for more than four months now. In addition, the isolation of Leader Apo has been further aggravated. The recent murder of our revolutionary comrade Baran Avrêl (Hüseyin Arasan) in Sulaymaniyah also makes clear that AKP-MHP fascism has launched a new wave of attacks against our movement and our people. Against this wave of fascist attacks, the need for an active struggle and for attacks on the enemy everywhere has become inevitable. For all these reasons, we hereby declare that we will end the halt of all military attacks as of today.

Today, everybody has understood more than ever that no progress can take place without the destruction of AKP-MHP fascism. Based on this reality, everyone, especially our people and all revolutionary democratic forces, must further increase the struggle against the fascist AKP-MHP government.”



## Iraq calls on the international community to repatriate its citizens from Hol Camp

ANF | BAGHDAD | 13 JUNE 2023

A conference held in Baghdad addressed the issue of Al Hol Camp in Northern and Eastern Syria. Iraqi officials, the UN Iraq representative, some members of the international coalition fighting against ISIS and ambassadors of various countries were present at the conference.

After the ISIS gangs were defeated by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in March 2019, tens of thousands of people were taken to the Hol Camp. About 51,000 people, mostly Syrians and Iraqis, stay in the camp. The majority of them are women and children, often the spouses and children of ISIS gangs. There are also about 8,000 women and children from 60 different nationalities living in the section of the camp known as the Annex Building. The children are raised in the camp with ISIS teachings and this poses dangers for the world. Despite the defeat of ISIS, its sleeper cells continue to carry out attacks in Iraq, Syria and Northern and Eastern Syria. In the past years, horrendous crimes were reported in Al Hol.

“Ending the Al Hol Camp problem has become an issue of the most important national interest for Iraq,” Ahmad Sahhaf, spokesperson for the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, said in a statement.

Sahhaf urged the international community to encourage all countries with citizens in the camp to “repatriate them as soon as possible with the aim of eventual closure of the camp” as it has become a “dangerous epicenter”.

Speaking at the conference, Iraqi National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji said that Iraq received 1,396 families, 5,569 of its citizens, from Hol Camp in the past few weeks. Despite the returns, approximately 25,000 Iraqis remain in the camp, making up almost half of the camp’s population.

The camp’s population of 73,000 has been reduced, in large part because thousands of Syrians and Iraqis have been allowed to return to their homes. Other countries, however, refused to take back their citizens.

Earlier this month, the SDF announced that it had handed over 50 Iraqi ISIS mercenaries to Baghdad. They also announced that he had sent 170 Iraqis living in the camp back to their countries.

The Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria has been calling on countries for years to send their citizens back from the camp.





## AANES asks its people not to go on a death journey

ANF | 13 JUNE 2023

On June 5, a boat carrying refugees sank off the coast of Algeria. According to reports, out of 26 people on the boat, 18 were Syrians and included women and children. Only one Syrian and one Algerian survived. The boat was supposed to arrive in Spain.

In a written statement on Tuesday, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) Foreign Relations Department said: “Our people once again received the news that their relatives lost their lives on the way to become refugees. Thousands of people from different backgrounds lost their lives on this path.”

The statement continued: “A few days ago, many people lost their lives off the coast of Algeria. Most of these refugees were from Afrin and Serêkanîye occupied by the Turkish state. Algerian officials finished the work of retrieving the bodies from the ocean yesterday. In line with its humanitarian and moral duties, the Autonomous Administration’s Foreign Relations Department is working to quickly receive the bodies of the citizens who lost their lives on the sunken boat in Algeria. We offer our condolences to the families who lost their relatives and call on our people not to endanger their lives on this path.”

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## Experts warn against remobilization of ISIS in disputed territories in Iraq

ANF | 13 JUNE 2023

ISIS gangs have recently increased their mobilization, especially in the disputed territories located in the border regions of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region north of the country.

Security expert Ahmed Sharifi spoke to Rojnews about the increase in the attacks and mobilization of ISIS members and said: “There are still ISIS terrorist groups in the regions between Kirkuk and the Kurdistan Region. They take advantage of the security vacuum in the region.”

Ahmed Sharifi emphasized that the ongoing attacks by ISIS were a dangerous warning and message for the Iraqi government and security institutions, adding that security measures in the disputed areas should be tightened.

An Iraqi security expert, who asked to remain anonymous, stated that the Iraqi security forces were planning a large-scale operation against ISIS cells. Accordingly, the operation will be carried out in Hamrin, Shai Valley, Hawija, Diyala, Tarmiya and Anbar, and an air operation will be launched in Hamrin in the coming days.

The Iraqi Security Press Office reported that ISIS members attacked Iraqi soldiers in Kirkuk's Falka Wadi Neft region on June 10, killing 3 soldiers, 2 of whom were officers, and injuring 4 police officers.

ISIS attacked Iraqi forces in the Rashad district last night. No official statement has yet been made regarding the ensuing fighting that lasted for hours.

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## HPG reports 83 attacks on guerrilla areas in Zap

ANF | BEHDINAN | 13 JUNE 2023

The Press Office of the People's Defense Forces (HPG) reported ongoing attacks by the Turkish army on the guerrilla-held Medya Defense Zones in southern Kurdistan (northern Iraq).

According to the HPG statement on Tuesday, the Turkish army has bombed the Medya Defense Zones more than eighty times in the past three days.

All of the attacks, both from the ground and from the air, were directed against guerrilla areas in the heavily contested Zap region.

HPG detailed the attacks as follows:

The Girê Cûdî Resistance Area, located in the Şehîd Delîl section of the Zap's western front, was bombed twice by fighter jets on 11 June.

The Girê Hekarî as well as the resistance areas of Sîda and Çemço were shelled by combat helicopters a total of thirteen times between 10 and 12 June. Eleven of these attacks targeted Sîda and Çemço.

HPG reported at least 68 attacks with howitzers, tanks and heavy weaponry on the areas of Şehîd Delîl, Girê Cûdî, Girê FM and Girê Amediyê on June 11.

In Sîda, Turkish occupation forces continue to try to demolish guerrilla posts with heavy construction equipment.

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## Turkish attack kills 4 fighters and injures 2 others in Manbij

ANF | MANBIJ | 14 JUNE 2023

The Press Office of Manbij Military Council (MMC) released a statement providing information about a deadly aerial attack by the Turkish state.

According to the statement, fighters of the Manbij Military Council were targeted by an UCAV (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle) attack by the Turkish state while on their way to the village of Dendeiyê, northwest of Manbij.

MMC fighters were set to rescue two children who had been injured in an attack on the village, which has been under artillery fire since early this morning. The attack claimed the lives of 4 fighters and left 2 others injured.

On the other hand, another UCAV attack on a house in the village of Ereb Hesên claimed the life of a civilian.

The autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria is attacked by Turkey every day. Manbij was named by Turkish head of state Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2022, along with Tel Rifat, as the first target for a new war of aggression against the region. According to the wishes of the Turkish government, both cities are to become bridgeheads for the invasion of a 30-kilometre-wide strip along the Turkish-Syrian border.

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## Number of Syrian soldiers killed in Turkish attacks rises to 5

ANF | 14 JUNE 2023

At least five soldiers of the Syrian government forces have been killed and two others wounded in the past 24 hours in Turkish shelling of positions in the Til Rifat in north-western Syria. According to information from the region, drone and artillery attacks by the Turkish army and its jihadist proxy forces have been taking place in Shehba and Afrin's Sherawa district since Tuesday evening. Reports say that the drone attacks were aimed directly at military posts of the Syrian government.

The towns and villages on the northern outskirts of Aleppo have been under Turkish fire since the occupation of Afrin in March 2018. Since the beginning of this week, there have been repeated security incidents. On Monday, a Turkish drone strike on an armoured personnel carrier in Shehba killed one Russian soldier and injured three others.

On Saturday, three members of the People's Defence Units (YPG) were killed in a targeted drone attack by Turkey in the south of Tel Rifat, and two other members of the Kurdish fighting alliance were injured. Around the same time, Turkish jihadist occupation forces carried out ground attacks in the region.

Manbij and Kobanê are also affected by the Turkish drone war against the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria. In Manbij, four fighters of the local military council were killed, and another was injured. In the surroundings of Kobanê, three people were injured in a drone attack on Monday.



## HPG releases balance sheet for the period of inaction

ANF | BEHDINAN | 14 JUNE 2023

The Peoples' Defence Forces (HPG) announced the balance sheet for the period of inaction, when the Turkish army targeted the Medya Defence Zones 4848 times with ground and aerial attacks, 224 times with cannons containing phosphorus, banned bombs and chemical weapons.

The balance sheet released by HPG Press Center on Wednesday said:

“In a statement on February 9, 2023, our KCK Executive Council Co-Presidency announced to the public its decision of inaction. Our People's Defence Centre (HSM) Headquarters Command published a statement on February 11, 2023, saying that ‘we will fulfil our responsibility by complying with the decision and perspective of the political will of our people and revolution. Our forces in the metropolitan and rural areas abided by this decision for more than four months, from February 9 to June 13’.”

### ‘32 comrades martyred’

The statement continued: “However, the fascist regime, filled with hatred against the Kurds and greed for power, did not pay regard to the inaction of our forces in any way. On the contrary, it has continued its attacks by organizing large-scale operations. It launched large-scale operations especially in the provinces of Dersim, Botan, Mardin, Hakkari, Van, Serhed and Amed in Bakure (North) Kurdistan. 22 comrades were martyred in North Kurdistan between February 9 and June 13: Yaşar (Osman Manak), Canşêr (Musa Miromilan), Deniz (Ali Akdoğan), Egîd (Ishak Çekin), Raperîn (Dicle Ömer), Rêvan (Peyam Demir), Botan (Mahmut Tekin), Alişêr (Emrah Arpak), Xebatkar (Musa Kahraman), Hêjar (Sevilay Akyıldırım), Bager (Orhan Kalabalık), Ekin (Nuran Altunmakas), Rosîda (Belgin Güven), Dilgeş (Serhat Yalçın), Bawer (Murat Aslan), Dilşêr (Mehmet Şakir Alici), Bawer (Dicle Yemen), Şerger (Servet Hesên), Rênçber (Hasan Ağırman), Zin (Dilan Gökalp), Mahsum (Vedat Ayhan) and patriotic Lokman Görgün were martyred. 10 other comrades were martyred in the Medya Defence Zones and Bashure (South) Kurdistan: Mazlum (Osman Üzen), Sinan (Fehmi Öğmen), Mazlum (Mehmet Salih Çakal), Ararat (Ahmed Muhammed), Koçer (Mehmet Salih Erdal), Botan (Bilal Mihemed), Viyan (Serkeftin Demir), Botan (Adil Eli) Bawer (Ahmet İlhan) and Canşêr (Basil Ahmet).

While the invading Turkish state continues its attacks in Bakure Kurdistan by conducting large-scale operations, it has continuously bombed the Medya Defence Zones with ground and aerial attacks. The Medya Defence Zones were bombed 373 times by fighter jets, 139 times by attack helicopters, 4336 times by howitzers, tanks and heavy weapons. The Turkish army attacked our positions in the Resistance Areas 224

times with phosphorus-containing cannons, banned bombs and chemical weapons. It also took action with heavy construction equipment to demolish our positions.

Although our forces abided by the inaction in Bakur and the Medya Defense Zones, 237 clashes took place between our forces and the invaders. While 84 members of the occupation forces were killed, 3 others were injured, and 1 counter-guerrilla was killed.

Despite our movement's decision of inaction, this is the result caused by the intensified attacks of the genocidal and colonialist Turkish state for the last four months. All these attacks by the Turkish army have rendered our movement's decision of inaction and the Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla's compliance with it meaningless and invalid. Undoubtedly, the fascist AKP-MHP regime, which uses the deaths suffered in this war to maintain its power, and its fascist policy bear the sole responsibility for this outcome.

The Kurdistan Freedom Guerrilla will continue its struggle to protect our people's existence and ensure their freedom with the Apoist self-sacrificing spirit, adhering to the line of martyrs."



## 4 injured by Turkish attack in a village on Qamishlo-Tirbespiyê road

ANF | QAMISHLO | 14 JUNE 2023

Turkey is escalating military violence against the autonomous region of northern and eastern Syria. After several deadly attacks on the greater Manbij area on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning, the Turkish state has now bombed the canton of Qamishlo. According to current information, four people were injured.

The attack, which was presumably carried out by a drone, was directed against the village of Shorik. The village is located about twelve kilometres east of the city of Qamishlo on the road to Tirbespiyê and is home to a cement factory. Among other things, one vehicle was hit in the air strike. It was initially unclear whether the injured were civilians or members of combat units.

The Turkish army has carried out several drone attacks in North-East Syria in the past 24 hours. In Manbij, at least six members of the local military council have been killed and three others wounded in four known airstrikes since last night. Four of the fighters died while trying to evacuate two children injured by artillery fire on a village near the town. In addition, a civilian was killed in a drone strike on his house.

At least four soldiers of the Syrian government forces were killed and five others wounded in the shelling of positions in the north of Aleppo. According to information from the region, drone and artillery attacks by the Turkish army and its jihadist proxy forces have been taking place in Shehba and Sherawa, Afrin since Tuesday evening. Apparently, the drone strikes were aimed directly at military posts of the Syrian government forces.



## Eleven provinces in Şirnak declared “security” areas for 15 days

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 15 JUNE 2023

Eleven provinces in Şirnak were declared temporary “security” areas for 15 days.

The statement made by the Governor of Şirnak, said that “Cudi Mountain, Besta region, Kurt Mountain, Kureşin, Kel Mehmet Mountains, Serin Valley, Feraşin, Altın Dağ, İncebel Mountain, Oymakaya and Tanin are declared as temporary security areas between 15 and 29 June.”



## HPG: Armored vehicle destroyed, 12 soldiers killed in Metina

ANF | BEHDINAN | 15 JUNE 2023

In a current overview of the war in the Medya Defense Zones, the Press Centre of the People's Defence Forces (HPG) reported that 12 members of the Turkish occupation forces were killed in a guerrilla sabotage in Metina.

According to the HPG, the action, which was carried out by mobile guerrilla teams last Sunday, was directed against reinforcement troops of the Turkish army that were set to be deployed to the Girê Hekarî resistance massif. The target of the sabotage was a Reo armoured personnel carrier, which was completely destroyed in the course of an explosion.

Remarking that the Turkish Ministry of Defence spoke of only two casualties in the ranks of the military in connection with the action, HPG pointed out that this information is not true. According to the statement, the Turkish army evacuated the wreckage of the vehicle only one day after the sabotage.

The guerrillas carried out further actions against Turkish occupation forces on the western front of the Zap region. On 12 and 13 June, guerrillas struck the Turkish troops five times in the area surrounding Girê FM, taking soldiers under artillery fire with heavy weapons. On Wednesday, mobile guerrilla teams with heavy weapons targeted the occupation forces trying to get stationed in the area.

HPG stated that the military violence of the Turkish army in southern Kurdistan continues unabated. In the past 48 hours, HPG recorded at least twelve airstrikes with fighter jets, which were directed against the areas of Girê Cûdî and Girê Amêdî on the western front of Zap; Golka in Metîna; Goşînê, Rostê and Sinînê in Xakurke; Deşta Kafya in Gare and Dola Bolê in Qendîl.

Turkish ground attacks against the region also continue unabated. According to the HPG, artillery and tank attacks hit various areas in Zap and Metîna at least 318 times between 12 and 13 June. Affected by the bombardments were the village of Sîda, the hills of Cûdî, Amêdî and Bahar, the village of Şêlazê, Golka and the Girê Hekarî.

In Zap, the Turkish army continues to try to demolish the guerrilla positions in Sîda and Girê FM with heavy construction machinery.

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## SDF: Attacks will not remain unanswered

ANF | 15 JUNE 2023

The General Command of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) released a statement about the increasingly ongoing attacks and crimes of the invading Turkish state in North-East Syria. SDF vowed that the persistence of the Turkish occupation in its acts of aggression and criminality will not go unpunished.

The SDF statement released on Thursday includes the following:

“This week witnessed an alarming escalation of the Turkish occupation’s brutal aggression in the populated regions of NE Syria. The areas of Al-Shahba, which provide refuge to displaced individuals from Afrin, along with Manbij, Ain Issa, and the al-Jazira areas, bore the brunt of this assault. Shockingly, the occupation did not spare innocent civilians, including women and children, resulting in the tragic deaths of three individuals, and four others sustained injuries, including two children, due to these direct brutal attacks.

This aggression has been meticulously planned for a long period, awaiting opportune circumstances, especially those involving the condonation of relevant parties and international organizations towards the undeniable and mounting crimes committed by the occupation and its mercenaries within Syrian territory. These crimes have specifically targeted our people in NE Syria. Furthermore, the unabashed support and endorsement of uncontrolled terrorist organizations, including ISIS cells and other criminal groups, within the occupied territories, exacerbate the gravity of the situation.

This aggression cannot be viewed in isolation from the occupation’s ulterior motives to divert attention away from its colonial endeavors on Syrian soil and the consequential impact on Syria’s future and unity. It also aims to secure favorable outcomes for its soldiers and mercenaries within Syria, both in existing and future agreements with international entities. These nefarious objectives serve as the underlying driving force behind all attacks on our regions.

What occupation’s claims about the assault on our forces are nothing but an attempt to weaken all national forces opposed to colonial plans and discourage them from engaging in confrontation. All Syrian parties must recognize that weakening our forces only paves the way for further Turkish incursions into Syrian territory and interference in sovereign decision-making, both in the present and the future.

The Turkish occupation and its mercenaries are acutely aware that they are not solely facing our forces, but also the indomitable will and unwavering determination of our people. Our forces commend the remarkable patriotic consciousness exhibited by our people in NE Syria, as they recognize the significance of resistance against the occupation's aggressions. We salute all our fighters on the frontlines for their unwavering commitment and sacrifices, particularly honoring our martyrs who have shed their blood to safeguard the well-being of the populace.

The persistence of the occupation in its acts of aggression and criminality will not go unpunished. Our SDF forces are resolute in their unwavering dedication to safeguarding the region and all its components, working tirelessly to ensure a future that is secure and stable.”

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## Femicide

### Turkish soldier who hit and killed 5-year-old in Yüksekova released on condition of judicial control

ANF | HAKKARI | 9 JUNE 2023

The vehicle belonging to an expert sergeant at the Yüksekova District Gendarmerie Command, which was traveling from Yüksekova (Gever) in the province of Hakkari (Colemêrg) along the Van way, hit a 5-year-old boy named Erdem Aşkan.

The expert sergeant who killed Aşkan, who was thrown 50 meters on the road due to the impact, pulled a gun on the people gathered at the accident site and fled the scene. He was later taken into custody in Yüksekova District Police Department.

Following the statements of expert sergeant A.K.P, the prosecutor's office took into account the incident report from the crime scene and referred A.K.P. to the Yüksekova Criminal Judgeship of Peace with a request for his release after the implementation of judicial control measures.

Sergeant A.K.P. was indeed released on the condition of judicial control. He will have to sign once a week and has been banned from driving.

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## Saturday Mothers attacked again on the 950th week of action for the disappeared

ANF | ISTANBUL | 10 JUNE 2023

Saturday Mothers have continued their action in Istanbul for their relatives who disappeared in state custody and the punishment of the perpetrators for the 950th week. Despite a contrary ruling by the Turkish Constitutional Court, the initiative was again denied access to their ancestral rally site in front of the Galatasaray High School on İstiklal Avenue.

The Galatasaray Square in front of the high school of the same name in the central district of Beyoğlu, where the Saturday Mothers' sit-in was to take place, has been widely cordoned off by police barriers since early morning. Galatasaray Square is considered a symbolic place for the struggle for human rights in Turkey. Riot police deployed with a large contingent immediately surrounded the group on the alleged grounds of "increased risk of attack by terrorist groups as there was a large number of people because of a Champions League match."

20 members and supporters of the initiative were taken into custody in the crackdown, including human rights activist Maside Ocak, sister of the Kurdish teacher Hasan Ocak, who was murdered in state custody in 1995.

Green Left Party MP Burcugül Çubuk criticised the police action against the Saturday Mothers, whose vigils have been arbitrarily banned and members detained by the use of force.

"This is happening despite a clear ruling by the Turkish Constitutional Court, which has ruled that the restrictions on Saturday Mothers' gatherings are unlawful. It is also sad that today the police took away two people who were showing solidarity with the Saturday Mothers. We are dealing with an isolation of the streets," said Çubuk.

In 1995, women in Istanbul took to the streets for the first time to draw attention to relatives who had been arrested and then disappeared. Since a large-scale attack on the Saturday Mothers ordered by the Ministry of Interior in the summer five years ago, Galatasaray Square has been a no-go zone for the Saturday Mothers. But this is contrary to the right to freedom of assembly and demonstration, ruled the Turkish Constitutional Court on 22 February 2023, rejecting the ministry's objection that the Saturday Mothers threatened the "protection of public order". "Everyone has the right to take part in unarmed and peaceful assemblies and demonstrations without prior permission," says Article 34 of the Turkish Constitution, which the security authorities violated by banning the Saturday Mothers' forcefully dispersed action in August 2018 and all subsequent ones. The blockade of the square is therefore invalid, said the court ruling. The Turkish Interior Ministry and the Istanbul police ignore the ruling and continue to violently crack down on Saturday Mothers.

## Number of child workers increasing both in the world and in Turkey

ANF | 11 JUNE 2023

Child workers, almost all of whom are employed without social security, are forced to work under more difficult conditions than women and immigrants, who are the most oppressed groups among the worker groups, and they do not receive compensation for their labor. Statistical data by UNICEF and the ILO (International Labor Organization) show that the number of child workers has increased gradually after wars and economic crises.

### **There are 160 million child workers in the world**

According to ILO data, a total of 160 million children (almost one every 10) are working. Of these, 63 million are girls and 97 million are boys. About half of these children work in hazardous jobs that affect their health and development.

Although a decrease was achieved in the number of child workers from 2000 to 2012, it is possible to see that the decrease has slowed down between 2012 and 2016. Considering the distribution of child labor in the world, Africa leads the way in child labor, both in percentage and number, with 92 million children, and one in five children on the continent is a worker. In the Asia-Pacific region, which ranks second, 49 million children are workers. In the Americas, 8.3 million, in Europe and Central Asia, 8.3 million and in the Arab countries, 2.4 million.

### **Children mostly employed in the agriculture sector**

In the distribution of child labor by sectors, agriculture has by far the largest share, with 70 percent of child workers in the world; that is 112 million child agricultural workers.

31.4 million children work in the service sector and 16.5 million in industry.

Children between the ages of 5 and 11 make up the largest proportion of child workers, as well as the majority of those working in hazardous work. 48% of child workers are in the 5-11 age group, 28 percent are in the 12-14 age group, and 25 percent are in the 15-17 age group.

### **Five million child workers in Turkey in the summer**

The report published by the Occupational Health and Safety Council (ISIG) in 2022, stated that there are at least 2 million child workers in Turkey, and this number approaches 5 million in the summer months.

According to ISIG data, 30.8 percent of the children work in agriculture, 23.7% in industry, 45.5 percent in the service sector, while the remaining hundreds of thousands of children work on the streets, in small and medium-sized enterprises, and in heavy and dangerous jobs.

It is known that at least 571 children have died in occupational accidents in the last 9 years in Turkey.



## Brutal femicide in Afrin

ANF | 13 JUNE 2023

A 40-year-old woman was murdered in occupied Afrin in northern Syria during an apparent robbery in her house. The perpetrators then set the building on fire. The victim was taken to a hospital, but her life could not be saved.

The murder weapon is said to have been a machete.

The brutal femicide of Ûfê Şêx Ehmed (other spelling Awfa Sheikh Ahmed) happened on Monday in the Maratê district of central Afrin, where the woman, originally from the village of Şiyûx in Raco, lived, according to local ANF sources.

Members of the Turkish-jihadist occupying forces are suspected to be behind the crime.

Afrin has been occupied by Turkey and its Islamist proxy troops for more than five years. What was once the safest region in all of Syria, which not only managed to free itself from the rule of the Baath regime in the power vacuum of the crisis, but also to establish a grassroots-democratic, ecological and gender-free form of society, is now destroyed. Everyday life is characterized by violence, strict Islamist Sharia law as well as strict order and a resettlement policy that is being tolerated by the international community.

The situation in Afrin is particularly dramatic for women and girls. Human rights groups, who work at the risk of their own lives, now document rape, sexual violence, kidnapping, ransom demands and the targeted murder of women almost every day. Afrin is an example of the consequences of long-term occupation by the Turkish army and its mercenaries.

Only a week ago, the Kurd Qedriye Elî was killed by invading troops in the canton. The femicide of the 70-year-old was committed by the “Fatih Sultan Mehmet” brigade. Mercenaries from the Turkey-loyal jihadist group fired randomly from their base in Maratê on the street, hitting the woman. She died at the scene.



# Human Rights Violations

## Two people sent to prison in Cizre

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 9 JUNE 2023

A.R. M.R. and R.T. were taken into custody following house raids carried out by police on Wednesday morning in Cizre (Cizîr), province of Şırnak (Şirnex). The three people, whose statements were taken at the Şırnak Provincial Security Directorate on Thursday, were taken to the courthouse. The prosecutor ordered the release of A.R. under judicial control, and sent M.R. and R.T. to court with a request for arrest.

The two men were remanded in custody because of the statements made against them by a secret witness.

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## ‘HÜDA PAR is granted seats in parliament while we are denied the bodies of our beloved ones’

ZEYNEP KURAY | ISTANBUL | 9 JUNE 2023

In the run-up to the parliamentary elections on May 14, Hûda-Par (Free Cause Party, the political wing of Kurdish Hezbollah) was included in the People’s Alliance, of the ruling AKP and its partner MHP, and thus granted seats in the parliament after the ruling bloc won the majority of the votes.

Hûda-Par played a role in tens of thousands of unsolved murders in the 1990s with its contra activities.

Many people were executed extrajudicially and disappeared in the Kurdish province of Batman, which Hezbollah used as a stronghold in its special war strategy in the 1990s. The aftermath of the countless victims remains unknown and their cases unsolved.

Feryal Çelik has been fighting for years to reveal the fate of her father, İbrahim, and her son, Edip, both of whom were victims of atrocities by Hezbollah. She spoke to ANF about what she has been through and the injustice she has been fighting.

### Mourning for 29 years

Feryal Çelik cannot forget the date of July 10, 1994, when Çelik witnessed his father and brother taken away by people who pretended to ask them to show an address. She has been in mourning since that day, bursting into tears while describing that night.

Çelik lived with her family in Batman's Soğuksu hamlet at the time. She says that her father, İbrahim, was engaged in farming and his brother was a construction worker in Antalya. Çelik notes that their village was under state pressure at the time. She states: "My brother Edip came to the village from Antalya. It was the night of July 10, 1994. We were at home. Someone knocked on the door, and when I opened it, I saw 4-5 masked and armed persons. They asked my father to take them to the house of a villager. My mother told my father not to go. My father replied that he would take them to the place and come back. My brother was at my uncle's house. When he came back home, he asked about my father. He immediately went outside when my mother told him that masked men had taken him away to show them an address. Despite my mother's warning, he went after them. His last words were 'I can't leave my father'. That was the last time we saw my father and brother. We have never heard from them since."

### **Killed by hogtie**

Çelik later found out that some other people had also been taken away from other surrounding villages on the same night. When they went to report about the disappearance of her father and brother, the police and gendarmerie made fun of the family, saying, "Why do you come here to ask about your disappeared relatives? Go and ask somewhere else."

Pointing out that the pressure of Hezbollah on the villages increased after this incident, Çelik says: "Hezbollah ran rampant in the village. They were leaving notes on the doors of the houses saying, 'This person will die.' They attacked one of the villagers with guns. They forced him to migrate after repeated threats. They kidnapped and killed a distant relative of ours, Sabri Şeker, who was trying to prevent people from migrating. The address that the masked people asked that night was the house of Sabri Şeker's brother. Şeker's body was found a few days after he had been kidnapped. He was hogtied and killed with a nylon bag put on his head."

### **'Criminal complaint remained inconclusive'**

Çelik notes that her mother was a kidney patient at the time, and every door was shut in their face. "We filed a criminal complaint with the prosecutor's office against Hezbollah members named Talat Rüzgâr, Aziz Önlük, İlhan Önlük, Resul Güneş and Çetin Dursun, but both the complaint and our efforts remained inconclusive. We have never heard from İbrahim and Edip Çelik again."

### **'No justice in this country'**

Çelik joined the justice vigil of Saturday Mothers after migrating to Istanbul. She has been searching for the bones of her brother and father for 29 years. Çelik draws attention to the fact that Saturday Mothers are denied access to their ancestral rally site in front of the Galatasaray High School in Istanbul, while HÜDA PAR enters the parliament. "They do not only deny us the bodies of our beloved ones, but also access to Galatasaray Square where we gather every week to ask about the fate of our disappeared relatives. On the other hand, they grant HÜDA PAR seats in the parliament and award it. There is no such thing as human dignity in this country. We are detained, but they can enter the parliament. Although we are right, we are persecuted, but they win seats in the parliament. There is no justice in this country."

## Police violence during house raids in Cizre

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 9 JUNE 2023

In the Cizre district of Şirnak, the Turkish police stormed various flats and detained several people this morning. The detainees include youngsters between the ages of 14 and 15, and Remzi Dadak, an executive member of the district branch of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP).

A person was able to record a video during a raid on one of the flats. The footage shows violence and insults. It can also be seen how the police try to prevent the person from recording the operation.

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## Five people taken into custody in Beytüşşebap

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 12 JUNE 2023

Simultaneous raids were carried out on many houses by the special operations police in the neighbourhood of Ali Çavuş in Beytüşşebap (Elkê), in the province of Şirnak.

As a result of the operation, Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Beytüşşebap District co-chair Zarife Borak, HDP District Administrator Emrah Yacan, Lokman Abi, Devran Abi and Mehmet Cin were taken into custody and taken to the District Police Department.

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## Musician kidnapped and beaten by police

ANF | BATMAN | 12 JUNE 2023

Abducted, abused, threatened with death: in North Kurdistan, this repression sequence is again a widespread method that the Turkish state uses to suppress political dissidents.

Increasingly, young people in particular are going public and reporting experiences that are reminiscent of one of the country's darkest chapters. Enforced disappearances of "enemies" were a common practice of the secret service and paramilitary forces, especially during the dirty war against the PKK in the 1980s and 1990s. Thousands of people were abducted during this time and only very few turned up again.

Many could only be identified as bodies in mass graves decades after their disappearance.

The procedure has changed in the meantime and abductees no longer have to fear death by torture - but nothing has changed in the matter itself.

The last known case is that of the Kurdish artist Dildar Didêrî. The singer, whose real name is Ali Çetinkaya, says he was kidnapped, beaten and threatened by people posing as police officers. He contacted the IHD branch in Batman (Êlih) and reported the incident.

The kidnapping of Dildar Didêrîs took place at a bus station in Bismil, south-east of Amed. After visiting family in the region, the musician prepared to go back to his home in Batman when he was stopped by three police officers on the terminal premises. “They showed me their police ID and put me in a vehicle. However, I was not taken to the police station,” Didêrî said in an interview with the Kurdish news agency Mezopotamya. Instead, he was handed over to three other people. The men were already waiting in an unmarked car and driving their victim to the village of Üçtepe, about ten kilometers southwest of Bismil. “We got off at an empty lot. There was nobody there” said Didêrî.

The informal detention lasted around four hours.

The musician said: “First, I was asked a number of questions. Because I refused to answer, I was beaten and verbally abused. That went on for about half an hour.” He was then brought to the ground by the alleged police officers that sat on him and put their hands around his neck.

The musician continued: “Because I was on the phone at the time of the arrest, they had access to my unlocked cell phone. They wanted information about my contacts and got angry because they didn’t get the answers they wanted. They said: ‘Why are you coming to Diyarbakir at all? In this desert we can get you out of the way without a soul noticing. If you help us, we will help you. We are the state.’ Meanwhile, they kept hitting me.”

After the ordeal, Didêrî was abandoned on the side of the road. Regarding the possible motives of the perpetrators, he said that his kidnapping was an attack on Kurdish art and culture. “We are committed to promoting Kurdish cultural work and to maintaining the Kurdish language. This fact is met with intolerance and contempt [by the state]. That's why we're being attacked.”

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## Diyarbakır Bar President: The Kurdish question cannot be resolved by security policies

ANF | AMED | 2 JUNE 2023

In an interview with ANF, the President of Diyarbakır Bar Association, Nahit Eren, stated that in the last 7-8 years, fundamental rights and freedoms have been undermined, and the country has seen a security perspective concerning the Kurdish question and very bad judicial practices. Eren said that they witnessed a judicial crackdown in the cases that concerned the Kurds and the criminalization of oppositional voices.

## One should not be too optimistic about the cabinet reshuffle

Eren continued: “Participation in meetings and demonstrations was even subjected to indictments. Now, after a terrible 7-8 years, a cabinet reshuffle naturally leads to a new expectation for all of us. The most important change, in my opinion, was the Minister of Interior, which is an important development. Of course, one should not be too optimistic about the cabinet reshuffle. In my opinion, a system policy, that is, the state policy, is in place.”

## The system doesn't rely on individuals

Eren pointed out that: “We do not know whether the cabinet reshuffle will lead to a change in the system or policies, but the current government system is not very dependent on individuals. For example, the new Minister of Justice has been the group deputy chair of the ruling party for years. He is a lawyer. We will see if he will resolve the problem of impartiality and independence of the judiciary in Turkey, but TİP (Workers' Party of Turkey) Hatay MP Can Atalay has not been released and the minister's statements on this issue are not very promising.”

Remarking that the judicial and bureaucratic practice in Turkey is related to systemic changes, Eren stated: “When you pursue the security policies of the state while dealing with the Kurdish question, you cannot take even a step forward. More precisely, if you consider the Kurdish question as a pure security issue, violations of rights increase. The practice of the judiciary also changes when you promote dialogue and negotiation when it comes to democracy and freedoms. The bureaucratic hard-line shrinks.”

## The new cabinet could be more responsive

Eren emphasized that no matter who comes to power, the Kurds have always demanded peace, democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms. He concluded: “From time to time, these demands were answered positively. There were times when the doors of dialogue were opened. If hawkish policies prevail, conflicts will continue. In this sense, we currently see that there is a serious weariness in the whole of Turkey. The conflict in 2016, the coup attempt, the pandemic, the earthquakes and the economic crisis led to serious weariness in all segments of society. In this respect, what we need is a serious social peace environment. I can say that this government and the new cabinet have a lot of work to do. While a much healthier communication could be established with the bureaucracy and ministries in the past, unfortunately, we could not communicate with Minister of Interior and Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdağ in recent years. We could not establish the contact and communication that we had during the term of Abdülhamit Gül. In the new period, I believe that we will have better communication with the new cabinet.”



## At least 18 people taken into custody in Muş

ANF | MÜŞ | 12 JUNE 2023

Turkish police stormed dozens of houses in the province of Muş and its districts early Monday morning.

At least 18 people were detained in the operation and taken to the provincial police department.

According to initial reports, the detainees are accused of participating in the funeral ceremony for Kurdish musician Mîr Perwer, who was murdered along with KCK Executive Council member Emine Kara (Evîn Goyî) and long-time Kurdish activist Abdurrahman Kızıl in an armed attack at the Kurdish cultural center Ahmet Kaya in Paris on 23 December 2022.

The musician was born in Muş and was living in France, where he had applied for asylum. He was forced to leave his homeland due to the political persecution by the Turkish state. He was active in the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and was sentenced to prison by the Turkish judiciary on "terrorist charges". Mîr Perwer belonged to the Kurdish cultural movement TEV-ÇAND.

When the remains of Mîr Perwer arrived in his home village for the funeral on 5 January, the Turkish state once again showed its hatred of Kurds. The coffin was seized by security forces, and transported to the cemetery with a shovel excavator. Only the closest family members could attend the funeral, while a large crowd of mourners was attacked with rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons. More than thirty people were taken into custody as the mourners were attacked by the police with tear gas, plastic bullets and water cannons.

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## Number of detainees in Beytüşşebap rises to 12

ANF | ŞIRNAK | 12 JUNE 2023

Turkish forces stormed several houses in the Beytüşşebap district of Şırnak province this morning.

The raids were carried out in line with an investigation launched by Şırnak Public Prosecutor's Office.

According to latest reports, 12 people were taken into custody, including HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Beytüşşebap district branch co-chair Zarife Borak and HDP district executive Emrah Yacan.

The reason for the detentions was not disclosed.

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## Patnos Municipality HDP co-mayors sent to prison

ANF | AGRI | 13 JUNE 2023

The HDP co-mayors of Patnos (Panos), Müşerref Geçer and Emrah Kılıç and the Human Resources Manager of the municipality, Uğur Laçın, were taken into custody on 9 June.

After spending 3 days in custody, the co-mayors were sent to prison.

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## Record number of online news blocked in first week of June in Turkey

ANF | 13 JUNE 2023

A record number of online news articles in Turkey have been blocked in the first week of June, marking the highest count for any comparable period this year, said the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) in an [article](#).

The MLSA wrote that “in the period between June 1 and June 7, access to 307 news articles was blocked by peace criminal judges. This was a stark increase compared to the 67 news articles that were blocked in the first week of June 2022.

In comparison, January saw the closest number of blockages for the first week of any other month, with the rest of the year paling in comparison to June’s numbers.”

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## Four months after the earthquake, people of Hatay still can't access clean water

ANF | HATAY | 13 JUNE 2023

With the earthquake on 6 February in the Turkish-Syrian border region, the drinking water supply has also collapsed in many affected areas. In the particularly hard-hit province of Hatay in southern Turkey, people are queuing for hours to get just 1.5 liters of clean water. This is because tap water is contaminated and even causes skin irritations and infections when washing. At the same time, the state has been collect-

ing money for water and electricity supply again since 31 May and is also demanding back payments for the months immediately after the quake.

### **NGOs started to leave the city one by one**

Seda Yüce is a member of Earthquake Solidarity in Hatay. Speaking to ANF about the current situation of the earthquake victims, she said that their problems have not changed. “It is true that the impression of the disaster was temporarily alleviated by the presence of aid organisations and non-governmental organisations on the ground. But this ended in April, when NGOs started to leave the city one by one. At the moment, local solidarity initiatives are practically shouldering the humanitarian work alone. In the first phase, aid came from many parts of Turkey. This continued for two months after the earthquake. Field kitchens, hospitals and pharmacies were set up and aid was organised. Since the end of April, however, there has not been the same level of activity on the ground as in the early days. Part of it was withdrawn because the aid could not be provided in this continuity. The problems are structural. Short-term or provisional solutions will not get you further than a certain point. No matter how hard civil organisations try, they cannot fill the gap left by the state. Official planning and mobilisation of large resources are needed for the next steps. Special laws need to be passed for these regions, special budgets set up and personnel allocated,” Yüce said.

### **Queuing for two hours for 1.5 litres of water**

Remarking that access to drinking water remains difficult, Yüce stated: “The CHP-run Hatay Municipality and other municipalities in the province are also not providing enough services. This threatens the health of the population. People are queuing for drinking water and unbelievable scenes are taking place. They queue for hours to get a 1.5 litre bottle of water. In these hot temperatures, they drink the water they get while queuing. There is no clean water from the mains, the pollution level of the water varies from region to region. People bathe and wash their clothes with tap water, but they get skin problems, itching, and the water causes infections. There are now extremely many mosquitoes and flies in the city. There are serious problems with rubbish collection and disposal. All these conditions increase the risk of epidemics. A government hospital has been opened in Defne and it is extremely overcrowded. Hospitals can hardly provide better services than health centres at the moment. Clinics are not able to conduct tests and examinations. Many women do not go to the hospital because the technical equipment is inadequate for gynecological diseases. We observe that people don’t believe they will get proper treatment.”

### **Water bills are issued**

Yüce explained that residents of severely damaged and destroyed buildings were exempted from paying running costs. However, houses that were not destroyed and, although uninhabitable, were classified as slightly and moderately damaged, and received electricity and water bills. These bills even included the months after the earthquake when there was no supply at all.

### **Paying for solidarity**

In particular, people who supplied others with electricity, as the electricity supply had partially collapsed or supplied salvage workers with electricity, are experiencing extreme hardship as a result. Yüce said that electricity bills reached up to 10,000 liras. “The houses in the neighbourhoods that had not collapsed, if they

had electricity at all, supplied their neighbours and the tents with electricity. They shared their electricity so that people didn't have to freeze and sit in the dark. But it is not only the electricity used by a house that is billed. There is collective electricity use. These bills cannot be paid. People have no livelihood. They have no work. They are helpless. They try to develop their own methods. Nobody lives in the damaged houses. They only go to their houses from time to time to get supplies. When they come home, they find the bills. Some people also wait in front of their houses and try to prevent electricity invoicing. There must be an arrangement that the bills are not collected in the earthquake area. The municipalities, when challenged, claim that they have to invoice the electricity because they have not been informed of any other decision.”

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## 15 jailed in Cizre, 2 detained in Bitlis

ANF | 13 JUNE 2023

Not a day goes by in Northern Kurdistan without people from the democratic opposition and civil society being targeted by the political genocide operations of the Turkish regime. In the Cizre district of Şırnak, fifteen people were remanded in custody on Tuesday and taken to a high-security prison in the province of Şırnak. The prosecutor and judge cited alleged statements by a supposed "witness" who accused the persons concerned of being members of a "terrorist organisation" as grounds for ordering their pre-trial detention. It is suspected that the statements of the witness, who was kept anonymous, were fabricated in order to make accusations.

Those detained last Friday during raids by special units of the Turkish gendarmerie and police in the Cudi and Nur neighbourhoods and imprisoned today include Remzi Dadak, from the district executive of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP). In total, the special forces forcibly detained 18 people four days ago. While two of them were released after interrogation by the public prosecutor, a third person was released on condition of judicial control.

On the other hand, two people were taken into custody in Bitlis province today. The detainees are Berivan Birlik, co-chair of the provincial association of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), and Mahmut Arukbağ of the local executive of the Green Left Party. The police did not give reasons for the detentions.

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## Germany tolerates pro-Erdogan ultra-nationalist groups

ANF | BERLIN | 14 JUNE 2023

Germany witnessed demonstrations by pro-AKP-MHP groups after Erdogan won the presidential elections in May. In the wake of the demonstrations, where violent incidents were reported, Left Party Deputy

Clara Bünge brought up the issue in the Federal Parliament (Bundestag). Bünge submitted a parliamentary question to the Federal Government led by Olaf Scholz, asking whether the government would put a ban on Turkish fascist groups that threaten the Kurds, the minorities and opponents of the Erdogan regime in Germany, as in France.

### **A threat to the safety of life**

In a reply to Bünge's parliamentary question on June 7, the Ministry of Interior claimed that there was no threat to the safety of life of the Kurds and Turkish opposition groups living in Germany. The ministry argued that the security units did not tolerate extremism in any way. It noted that those involved in such crimes would be punished within the framework of legal norms, adding that although some isolated incidents occurred, the government is not planning to impose a ban.

### **Bünge: What else needs to happen?**

Left Party Deputy Bünge reacted to the statement of the Ministry of Interior and said it was unacceptable that the government was not planning to impose a ban on pro-Erdogan ultra-nationalist groups, despite their involvement in violence. She criticized the fact that the government did not take a decision to protect the Kurds and other opposition groups in order not to anger Erdogan. Bünge said: "What else needs to happen for the ultranationalist 'Grey Wolves' to be banned? The Grey Wolves are still the biggest far-right group in Germany and are as dangerous as the Neo-Nazis."

Bünge pointed out that the German government criminalized the Kurdish Freedom Movement instead of banning Turkish nationalist groups that threaten the Kurds, the Armenians and other left/opposition groups and put their lives in danger. She stressed that her party did not accept this. Bünge recalled that only in May, three Kurdish activists received long-term prison sentences and Kurdish politician Kenan Ayaz was deported from Cyprus to be tried in German courts. She said: "By bringing Ayaz to Germany, the German government proved once again that it served Erdogan's interests."

### **Intelligence: A threat to internal security**

Meanwhile, contrary to the Ministry of Interior's statement, Turkish fascist groups pose a "threat to internal security," according to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. In a report on Turkish racist and nationalist groups released in January, the domestic intelligence agency repeated that Turkish ultra-nationalists posed a danger to the Kurds, the Armenians, the Greeks, the Jews and the Alevis in Germany.

### **The ministry doesn't comply with the parliament's decision**

Following the attacks of Turkish fascist groups on Armenians in Dijons, France, on October 29, 2020, the French government decided to ban these groups. A draft law prepared by the governing parties and the opposition in Germany was approved in the Bundestag to ban the Grey Wolves group on November 18, 2020. However, although nearly 2.5 years have passed since the introduction of the draft law, there has been no attempt by the Ministry of Interior to prevent or ban the activities of these groups or to break the influence of Turkish racism in Germany.



## Kurdish singer sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in prison

ANF | ADANA | 14 JUNE 2023

The hearing of the case against Koma Pel soloist İlyas Arzu and singer Jiyan Savcı was held at the 2nd Heavy Penal Court in Adana on Wednesday. The two Kurdish musicians, both of whom are standing trial without arrest, are accused of “membership in a terrorist organization”, meaning the PKK.

Arzu and Savcı did not attend the hearing, where they were represented by their lawyers.

While the prosecutor demanded both to be sentenced, lawyers rejected the accusations directed against their clients.

The court board acquitted Jiyan Savcı and sentenced İlyas Arzu to six years and three months in prison for “being a member of a terrorist organization”.



## 5 members of Green Left Party detained in Tekirdağ

ANF | 14 JUNE 2023

In the parliamentary elections on May 14, the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), which is under threat of being banned, contested under the umbrella of the Green Left Party, which has been constantly targeted by the Turkish regime since.

Turkish police carried out raids in the province of Tekirdağ in western Turkey today. During the operation in the early morning hours, five executives and members of the Green Left Party were taken into custody.

The detainees are accused of “membership in a terrorist organization”, meaning the PKK. A confidentiality order was placed on the file.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s regime has consistently criminalised the HDP since unilaterally ending the dialogue process with the Kurdish movement in 2015. Thousands of members have been arrested as alleged terror supporters and enemies of the state, including former co-chairs Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş, as well as dozens of mayors of Kurdish municipalities. Ankara wants to render pro-Kurdish politics incapable of action and is now also demonising the Green Left Party as “terrorist”.



## Lawyer Şahin taken into custody in Amed

ANF | AMED | 15 JUNE 2023

On 25 April, 128 people, including journalists, lawyers, artists and politicians, were detained as part of an investigation in Amed.

Within the scope of this investigation, lawyer Süleyman Şahin, who went to give a statement to the Diyarbakır Courthouse investigation prosecutor on Wednesday, was taken into custody.

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## Lawyer exposes violations of rights in Iğdır S Type Prison

ANF | IĞDIR | 15 JUNE 2023

The S Type prisons worsened the isolation of prisoners. Violations of rights continue in Iğdır S Type Closed Prison, which is frequently on the agenda with torture and ill-treatment, continue to be exposed.

On 20 February 2022, Sezer Alan and on 20 March 2022, Sinan Kaya suspiciously lost their lives there, while the prison administration tried to cover up the deaths by saying they were “suicides”.

In Iğdır S Type Prison, there are many violations also against lawyers. Rıdvan Şahin, one of the lawyers who was attacked by the guards during a visit to a client, talked to Mesopotamia News about the violations in the prison and the beating against him.

### ‘10-15 guards walked on us’

The lawyer said that he visited the prison with 3 lawyers on 14 April, following complaints of torture and ill-treatment by the families of the detainees and convicts since January. Şahin said: “One prisoner said things were so bad that he wanted to harm himself. While I was waiting in the lawyer’s room, I heard screams, prisoners were saying ‘don’t do it, don’t hit me on the head’. Our lawyer friends warned the guards not to torture prisoners. Thereupon, 10-15 guards walked on us. The guards were waiting for an opportunity to attack our friends. When I tried to stop that, they started attacking me as well.”

### Complaints of torture from prison

Stating that they kept a report about the incident and filed a criminal complaint, Şahin added: “When we talked to other lawyers, we realized that there were many complaints about this in prison. There were complaints from the detainees, but the attorney general’s office refused to talk to us about it. We do not know why they did not want to meet, but we personally experienced this attack. If this is done to the lawyers, we cannot even guess what is done to the detainees. There have been complaints since January that prisoners have been oppressed and ill-treated.”

The S Type was opened in the city during the Covid pandemic, Şahin said, adding: “After 2022, we received many torture complaints. It was alleged that two political prisoners committed suicide. After these deaths, more attacks began. One of my clients said that the guards are insulting them and when they respond, they take them to a room. Normally, the guards have a sound and video camera on their neck, but they turn it off when they enter the room. They beat the prisoners without being seen or heard.”

The lawyer said that Fuat Bulut, another prisoner he went to visit, cut his wrists because he could not stand the torture. “During our visit last month, the prisoner told me that they were trying to intimidate them.”

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## HDP and Green Left Party to organize public meetings

ANF | ANKARA | 15 JUNE 2023

The Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) and the Green Left Party completed their election evaluation meetings. A series of decisions were taken at the Party Assembly and Central Executive Board meetings.

First, meetings will be held with provincial and district organizations. Meetings to be held in the party administrations are scheduled to be concluded between 17-25 June.

Furthermore, the parties will organize public meetings in provinces, districts, neighbourhoods and villages. The organizational situation will be discussed, and the criticism and demands of the public will be addressed at the meetings. Representatives of non-governmental organizations, opinion leaders, deputies and party executives will also attend the meetings. Public meetings are planned to be held in open spaces, not indoors.

The public will be granted the right to speak.

As part of the program, party members will make house visits during the Feast of Sacrifice. Village and family visits will continue during the holiday.

After the self-criticism phase and the public meetings, local and central conferences will begin.

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# Interview

## Kalkan: The struggle will become more radical

ANF | 14 JUNE 2023

Speaking in a special program on Medya Haber TV, PKK Executive Committee Member Duran Kalkan said that the forces that will carry out the struggle against AKP-MHP fascism should prepare themselves and called on everyone to take their place in the anti-fascist, democratic resistance.

*Let us start by talking about the current situation of Abdullah Öcalan. What are the latest developments with regards to him and his ongoing imprisonment on the Turkish prison island İmralı?*

First of all, I would like to salute the historic İmralı resistance and Leader Apo [Abdullah Öcalan] with respect. As a movement and as a people, for 27 months, we have not received any information from Leader Apo and the other comrades imprisoned on İmralı. Lawyers and politicians regularly talk about this situation and our friends have recently evaluated this issue as well. They all said that such an isolation has never been implemented in history. Even in South Africa, where isolation was practiced most severely, people recently stated that the measures against Nelson Mandela were not this heavy. The right to information cannot be taken away. But this state of non-communication and absolute isolation continues. There is absolutely no change on the side of those who run İmralı.

There is a limit and a measure even to enmity. There is such a thing as the law of war and the law of enmity. Let's assume that we are enemies. But enemies meet with each other. They are in communication with each other. Because wars do not always end with one side finishing and destroying the other side completely. Compromises and agreements are a more likely end. They happen through communication and negotiation. They may see us as enemies. But this government has given us promises at the highest level, at the ministerial level, even at the presidential level.

One might of course say, how can you believe a promise given by the AKP? Everything they say is a lie. Of course, we can't just say that and simply move on. This promise must be fulfilled. We have repeatedly stated that there is no law in İmralı. The isolation continues. Why? Because those who run this place promised that it would not be like this. They neither fulfill the requirements of their law, nor do they fulfill their own promises. And they do not implement international resolutions either. Not only regarding İmralı. For example, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided that former HDP Co-Chairs Figen Yüksekdağ and Selahattin Demirtaş and other detainees in connection with the Kobanê case must be released from prison. Turkey is supposedly bound by European law. It accepts it but does not apply it. Their approach of not recognizing anything other than their own politics continues. We have also talked about the issue of fabricated disciplinary penalties before. Why were these penalties given? At one point they said it was for speaking loudly. If there is a penalty, there must be a reason for it. But these reasons are not put forward. Because we know very well that anything that would require such a penalty cannot happen in İmralı. These are all fabricated things to cover up the actual situation. One aspect is to pre-

vent meetings [with family members or lawyers], but the main aspect, which is much more important, is that in the 25th year [of Abdullah Öcalan's imprisonment], according to European law, the situation of Leader Apo and the İmralı system must be discussed. This is about what is called the 'Right to Hope'. His situation needs to be discussed again. He needs to be tried and even released.

Normally, according to European law, the Turkish administration no longer has the possibility to keep Leader Apo in İmralı. The lawyers have also said this. This issue has been emphasized recently. We have drawn attention to this many times in the recent past. Because we ourselves learned about European law by experiencing it first hand. We also learned about the defendants' position. Learning about the law and the position of the defendant brings about a better understanding of the issue at hand. So this is what these disciplinary penalties are really about. Now many circles are emphasizing their importance. We definitely need to insist on this. We need to fight more against this attitude. Lawyers, politicians and human rights defenders have recently been drawing more attention to this issue.

This situation cannot continue like that. Europe cannot remain silent. European institutions, the CPT and the Council of Europe are complicit in this unlawfulness and in what is being done in İmralı. Therefore, there is concrete criticism with regards to this. This is very clear. There is not much we have been hearing from these institutions.

Recently, an election took place and now the People's Alliance is forming a new government. On the Aegean coast, on the Mediterranean coast, in the Marmara region and in Kurdistan, this alliance was not able to win. But it won in other places. Now they are forming the new government. But the Kurds have rejected both Tayyip Erdoğan and the People's Alliance by more than 70 percent, up to 75 percent. They did not vote for them. The Green Left Party won in these places. It won with a majority of around 65 percent and in many cities it exceeded 70 percent. In others it reached 55-60 percent. Now Tayyip Erdoğan is forming the new government. The People's Alliance will be making the decisions in parliament in the future. But the Kurds have rejected both of them. The Kurds have rejected the decisions to be taken by these two institutions. Their decisions are not binding for the Kurds. This is not an administration of the Kurds. This is what I am trying to say: If there was such a situation not in Kurdistan, but in another part of the world, let's say in Europe, these states, politicians and all those who call themselves human rights defenders would raise hell. They would say that this government cannot govern. Because it has been refused, it was not able to win. But now no one is making a single noise. It's as if there was no such result. The Kurds have rejected the new government in Turkey. The decisions it will take will be anti-Kurdish. This new government will be in a state of war. It will do everything to crush the Kurds. Everyone knows this, but they say nothing. This is the situation in İmralı. So much lawlessness and injustice. All this is happening in İmralı. But they don't make a sound. Why? Because this is where the Kurdish will for freedom is. All of this is linked to the approach to the Kurdish people, i.e. to the Kurdish genocide.

The main Kurdish genocide institution is the İmralı torture and isolation system. This has been the case for the last 25 years. Before that, similar institutions had emerged in different forms. They took many people to the gallows in the last century in all four parts of Kurdistan. We know this very well.

This is the situation today. That's why no one is speaking out. This needs to be exposed. Of course, we need to go further. We need to wage both legal and political struggles. The struggle is important and on this basis all our struggles continue in every field. I would therefore like to salute all the struggles against

the İmralı torture and isolation system and for the physical freedom of Leader Apo. I would like to wish everybody involved in these struggles success once again.

We should never say that we are struggling but that there are no results. This struggle is very important. It has an impact on politics. It certainly has an impact on life in İmralı. The people's struggle will break the walls of İmralı and destroy the system of torture and isolation. It is necessary to believe that the struggle will win. If we make it bigger, if we wage the struggle more widely, we will definitely achieve results. Our people and international friends need to know this. Therefore, there should be absolutely no despair. Nobody should think that there are no results. On the contrary, if we struggle more, we will achieve more results. We need to therefore increase the struggle. On this basis, I would like to call on everyone to increase the struggle.

*The attacks of the Turkish state on your movement continue. What does this mean for the decision of your movement after the earthquake in Turkey to halt all its military attacks?*

First of all, I would like to commemorate all the martyrs of this war with respect, love and gratitude. I commemorate all the martyrs of Zap, Avaşın and Metina [areas in South Kurdistan/North Iraq] in the person of Comrade Zerdeşt, Comrade Hüseyin Arasan, our martyr of Sulaymaniyah, and our martyrs of Botan and Lice with respect, love and gratitude. I salute the guerrillas and our people who continue to resist against all the attacks by Tayyip Erdoğan and the fascist dictatorship of the People's Alliance. This resistance will undoubtedly grow much stronger in the upcoming period.

Until now, we have been talking about our decision to halt all military attacks. That is probably the issue that currently attracts most attention or curiosity. Our leadership had deemed the halt of all attacks necessary due to the earthquake. We still believe that this was the right decision to take. Then, our movement extended its decision until the May 14 elections in order to prevent any new provocations. We still find this decision meaningful too. But we, our friends and especially our central headquarters commanders and HPG BIM [Press Center of the People's Defense Forces] have made very clear statements about this issue: On our side, this decision to halt all attacks had been taken. Yet, the other side did not take such an attitude. It never did. When they did not have enough strength or when they were occupied with other things, their attacks were low. But when they had made the necessary preparations, they increased their attacks. Our decision to halt all attacks has therefore not been responded to by the administration of the Turkish state.

Some circles have said that they find this decision positive, but so far no results have come from their side either. So what is the point we have reached now? Elections took place and their results have been published. Erdoğan has established his new administration at almost lightning speed. He works like a machine. Tayyip Erdoğan had obviously prepared himself well in advance for this. He knew everything. It's like a script that has been written and prepared is being played out. Parallel to this, Erdoğan has also increased attacks. There are military attacks everywhere. There have been repeated statements by our Central Headquarters with regards to the Medya Defense Zones [areas in South Kurdistan controlled by the guerrillas]. There are the monthly balance sheets and also the daily balance sheets. According to them, there are at least 50 to 60 attacks every day. On some days, there are hundreds of attacks. There are attacks on the ground. Today, information was published about the intention of the occupation forces to increase their attacks in Xakurke [area in South Kurdistan]. There were attacks in many areas by the Turkish army, e.g. in Lice and Botan [areas in North Kurdistan]. And consequently, there were defense actions by the guer-

rilla forces against the attacks. Rojava is also under constant attack. Şengal [Sinjar] was attacked and there was an attack on Sulaymaniyah as well. The MIT leadership has recently changed. I guess the new leadership wanted to prove its competence by committing a massacre in Sulaymaniyah. On the day of the elections, they also shot an IYI Party member. And they ran over a child in Gever [area in North Kurdistan]. They are making arrests every day. For example, they arrested the mayors of Patnos. There are increasing attacks. These attacks have military and political dimensions. In the face of all these attacks, of course, our decision to halt all military attacks has become meaningless.

There are increasing fascist, colonialist and genocidal attacks and there is also resistance against them. The guerrillas have always resisted the attacks, retaliated and struck blows. It has been sensitive in this regard. The guerrillas need to do this even more. It needs to be able to develop new ways of attacks towards new targets, more widespread, in wider areas, thus going beyond its old style. And I think the guerrillas are already doing exactly that. Our central headquarters commanders have recently declared that the guerrillas are ready to do its part successfully. This is very important.

There were attacks on Şengal recently. And Rojava is also being attacked. Especially in the attack on Sulaymaniyah, they brazenly murdered a revolutionary patriot. How many times has this happened already? This has now crossed a line. Our comrades, all patriots, our people and the revolutionary democratic forces of Turkey must see this: We are facing a government that exists on the basis of war and massacres. This is also the case for the newly established government. And it will attack even more. Everyone needs to understand this. Therefore, everybody should adopt an appropriate attitude. We need sensitivity. We cannot act as if there is no such thing. We are facing an enemy who wants to destroy us, who wants to annihilate us. And it does whatever is necessary for this. It attacks 24 hours a day. In this case, we must respond to this. So what do we need to do? We must improve our defense measures. Everyone needs to take measures for their own security. This is not only necessary for the guerrilla or our revolutionary militants, but also for all the people, patriots, women and the youth. Because the attacks target everyone. It is not clear where and who will be attacked next. Therefore, every section of society needs to take security measures. We must take defense measures. We should not act as if we were living in a free and democratic environment. We should not wait for someone else to guarantee our security.

Secondly, it is necessary to fight against these attacks and we must be the ones who fight. Every patriotic revolutionary man, woman and youth must be a freedom fighter. There is an enemy attacking them. Whenever they have the opportunity, they must fight and strike a blow against the enemy so that they can mobilize all their means and strength. This is what people's resistance means. This is total resistance. This is called self-defense. Otherwise, only talking is not self-defense. Approaches that take self-defense away from the military dimension are wrong. This issue is mainly military and related to security. It has other meanings too. But in the end, military security is essential. In this respect, our people, our international friends, all patriots and comrades should know this well: They want to exterminate us. Therefore, we can only live by fighting against those who want to exterminate us, striking blows against them and defeating them. Our duty is to wage such a struggle, to wage war. Everyone must realize this. We have said this before, but this is not being put into practice. Even when the enemy doesn't have a whole lot of power, it attacks and achieves results. We must not give the enemy this opportunity. Therefore, I call on everyone to be sensitive, to be cautious, to ensure their own security and to fight against the enemy. I call on everyone to fight against the fascist, colonialist and genocidal mentality, politics and attacks. Only such a war will allow us to stay alive.



## Kalkan: Turkey's democratization cannot be realized without the Kurdish struggle

ANF | 15 JUNE 2023

In the second part of this interview, PKK Executive Committee Member Duran Kalkan, analyzed the recent election results in Turkey.

*The discussions about the election results in Turkey and North Kurdistan continue. How do you evaluate the results?*

The May 14 elections took place in the midst of a great struggle. This struggle was based on the guerrilla resistance. We were waging this struggle on the basis of the revolutionary people's war strategy and the enemy was waging a total annihilation attack. The elections therefore took place as a new method of struggle in the context of such a relentless war. This method of political struggle was important. Since it was linked to this struggle and could produce certain results in this context, it could actually determine the future course of the struggle. It was not wrong to attach such an importance to the elections. In fact, an important result has emerged. Now, there is clarity. Just like the elections themselves, their result is also important. If AKP-MHP fascism had suffered an electoral defeat, if fascism had entered the process of collapse, the way would have been paved for the democratization of Turkey on the basis of Turkish-Kurdish freedom. The struggle would have continued on that basis. This would have been a new struggle with its own ways and methods. But what is happening now? What are Tayyip Erdoğan and the People's Alliance based on? The fascist government has renewed itself. No matter what form it has taken now, this government has been strengthened. In a way, of course, it will continue in the old way. The efforts to institutionalize fascism and the dictatorship will continue. But in other ways, it will not be the same as before. It will try to attack with new methods. Tayyip Erdoğan said that they will increase military attacks both in Turkey and abroad, and that they will increase their diplomatic attacks as well. New methods of struggle will therefore be developed. The struggle between the fascist dictatorship and democracy, Kurdish freedom and democracy in Turkey has thus entered a new period.

Now there are discussions and important evaluations within this framework. But some evaluations are too superficial, too shallow, too formal and too insignificant. We need to express this clearly. For example, there is a very extreme approach that reduces the issue to individuals. Moreover, even before it was announced that Tayyip Erdoğan had won, many circles inside and outside the country immediately became followers of Erdoğan. This has been going on for some time now. Those who said so-and-so things to Kılıçdaroğlu before the elections are now trying to give advice to the new government as if they had never said those words. They are trying to find a place in this government. There are currently such unethical approaches and attitudes.

The important point here is that many evaluations do not fully focus on the central aspects of the election results. What are the central aspects? We made an evaluation a month ago, right after the elections, right

after May 14th. And we still largely maintain the positions we talked about back then. For example, we drew attention to what the AKP, in alliance with the MHP, has created in Turkey, and what they now want to do in Kurdistan in alliance with the KDP, in alliance with this contra force. This was an important point. Many circles don't see this. They talk a lot about how Erdoğan cheated, how he stole votes and how he thus won. Yes, he may not have actually won. Kılıçdaroğlu may have won the election. There was a lot of cheating. But everybody knew that he would do that. This is one aspect, a technical aspect. It's not all about cheating. Ok, Kılıçdaroğlu did not become president. But even if he had, Tayyip Erdoğan still has this amount of votes.

Not all of these votes were rigged. Now these votes are important. What does this show? Fascism has a mass base. This has become clear. Leader Apo has talked about how the nation state turns the people into a herd by committing a sociocide. This is what is being carried out in Turkey. Turkey has tied its society to the MHP. Now it wants to tie the Kurds into Hezbollah members. This is the biggest crime and sin of Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP. This is not just a simple mass of voters. Through art, propaganda and education, people are being brainwashed and a new mentality and new emotions are being shaped.

On the other hand, not only a mentality is given to these people. They are also being organized. Fascist gangs are being organized. Just like there are gangs of ISIS, al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood, now there are also MHP and Hezbollah gangs among the AKP supporters. These are organizations that have taken up weapons. They killed a member of the İYİ Party on the night of the election. If they had really wanted to fight or if somebody had said that Tayyip Erdoğan had lost, nobody knows what would have spilled onto the streets.

Ekrem İmamoğlu was not able to hold a rally. When they threw stones at him in Erzurum, he ran all the way to Istanbul. Kılıçdaroğlu could not enter this area at all. If Kılıçdaroğlu had become president, there would have been a president who would not have been able to hold a rally in Erzurum. No one except the MHP, AKP and Hezbollah can go to the places where Tayyip Erdoğan received votes. There is an organized and armed gang. This is a great danger. This is not only a danger for today's politics. It is a danger for the future of Turkey. This is a danger not only for Turkey and the Kurds, but for the peoples of the Middle East and for all humanity. Some political circles in the Middle East do not see this and the famous democracy of Europe turns a blind eye to this development. They immediately turned to cooperation with Tayyip for the sake of their own interests. The President of France was among those who declared Tayyip Erdoğan's victory even before the results of the elections were announced. This is unacceptable. But when he faced ISIS, his hands were tied. ISIS fighters are being organized in Turkey. This is not talked about. This is a very important fact and a great danger that the election results have highlighted. It is necessary to fight against this. And it is not only the Kurds' job to take a stance and fight against this.

Now that this power is attacking the Kurds, if others say that they will not be attacked, they are mistaken. Tayyip Erdoğan has threatened everyone with his gangs. Tomorrow it will be their turn too. This is a danger for everyone. Yet, this is not being discussed. Some circles have not shown any reaction to this, as if this was a normal situation. The alliance of the AKP, MHP, Hezbollah and Hürda-Par is seen as a normal alliance, a political alliance. And the sections of society they organize and get their votes from are seen as normal. This is a big mistake.

*How do you look at the election performance of the CHP and the National alliance?*

The CHP has done similar things a couple of times. Muharrem Ince was in the lead in 2018. Suddenly, he disappeared after midnight. A few hours later, Tayyip Erdoğan said that he had won. And Muharrem Ince simply accepted it. In the recent election, the mayors [of Istanbul and Ankara] spoke several times in front of the press until about midnight. They said that they were ahead. But after that, nothing was heard from them. Then it was said that the People's Alliance had received the majority and that Tayyip Erdoğan had won.

Kılıçdaroğlu has said that the elections were not legitimate and that they were rigged. But why didn't you fight? On the night of the elections, the CHP was talking until midnight, but then it simply withdrew. It thus gave the election to Tayyip Erdoğan and made Tayyip Erdoğan win. This is how Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu governs.

The National Alliance needs to evaluate why they did not win the election. But there is no discussion about this. The National Alliance did not put forward an alternative. With regards to democratization, they only proposed a strengthened parliamentary system instead of a presidential system. There had already been a parliamentary system before the current presidential system. So their proposal was not a proposal for change, but for a move backwards. They talked about change, but they could not bring about any change. In fact, they could not put their finger on the fundamental problems of Turkey. There is the Kurdish problem, the problems of women, the problems of workers and laborers. They could not put their finger on the problems of war and foreign relations. They ran with whatever Tayyip Erdoğan said. Tayyip Erdoğan directed them all. They used Tayyip Erdoğan's language against the PKK. And what was the result? Talking about the PKK means talking about the Kurdish problem. If you cannot offer something different with regards to the Kurdish problem, then you are not saying anything different from Tayyip Erdoğan. Because the most fundamental problem of Turkey is the Kurdish problem.

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu may be a humble and sensitive person. He may be a successful bureaucrat. But he is not a good politician. He is not a fighter. He obstructs society. At the most critical point, he led Tayyip Erdoğan and AKP-MHP to win. He appeared to be struggling, but maybe he is making the struggle futile. In that sense, he is not a good politician or fighter. He was not able to put forward a democracy program. Now some people say that the CHP needs to change. That's all fine, but what are those who demand change really talking about? Should Kılıçdaroğlu change or should the CHP's understanding, program and politics change? If this should change, what does the CHP's politics have to offer that is new with regards to Turkey's fundamental problems? Will Kılıçdaroğlu change or not? Now they are discussing about this. This will not lead to anything. We need to raise awareness among the CHP supporters concerning this issue. A CHP stuck in this situation will never take over power. Kılıçdaroğlu is supposedly the most leftist. He won over those who broke away from the AKP and Welfare Party. He took his eternal opponent DP with him. What will he do now? Are they really going to put forward a democracy program, or are they going to turn the remaining CHP into an AKP? Will they pull the CHP more to the right? This needs to be discussed. But the current discussions are not at this level. The current evaluations do not have this kind of content, they are very cheap. We have seen that especially certain intellectuals, journalists and writers are at a very low level. I can say this clearly. They use such shallow and superficial words. This is more like deceiving people. This doesn't lead to anything. Therefore, yes, there needs to be a change in the CHP. The CHP supporters need to be able to discuss and question all policies really well.

*The Green Left Party and other democratic forces in Turkey have also been discussing the election results. What do you think about how these discussions have been going so far?*

There is currently an intense debate within the democratic forces. They have called this a process of self-criticism. We attach great importance to this. This needs to be taken to a very positive conclusion. A new process of struggle has emerged. In order to fulfill its requirements successfully, we need to learn the lessons of the past. We need to subject the past to a critical, self-critical analysis. Only then can we understand the new process correctly and successfully fulfill future duties and responsibilities. This is what we all do. There cannot be any other approach to this issue. Without self-criticism and without learning the lessons of the previous process, one cannot be successful in the new future. Because without this, you cannot innovate.

In order to change society, you have to change yourself. In order to create innovation in society and in politics, you have to renew yourself. This means correcting yourself by eliminating the mistakes and shortcomings of the past. This is the process of self-criticism. On this basis, we are indeed in such a questioning process. First of all, all revolutionary organizations should be making such an inquiry. There should not be an approach in revolutionary organizations that refrains from self-criticism and simply considers what has been done as correct and sufficient. On the other hand, there should not be cheap or hurtful kinds of criticism. It is necessary to pay attention to the style, language and content. For example, one should not simply talk about the Kurds and make them the addressee of collective criticism. And the other one should not simply talk about the Turkish left or the Turks. Mistakes can be made. Criticism can also be made. It is important to show the way and to be a winner. Why? Because Leader Apo has said that the Turks cannot be without the Kurds and the Kurds cannot be without the Turks. The Kurdish freedom struggle cannot succeed without developing the struggle for democracy in Turkey. Turkey's democratization cannot be realized without the Kurdish struggle. These are strategic allied forces that are closely intertwined with each other. There is such a strategic unity and alliance. Even if there are mistakes here, even if there are shortcomings and deficiencies, and even if there are differences, we should always focus on creating unity. We should always strive to be comrades. We must not get divided and be torn apart by creating divisions. We must not use language that will weaken these strategic allies, their relationship and alliance. At first, people talked about self-criticism, but lately in the press there has mostly been criticism. This is unacceptable. There are those who criticize everything and those who criticize in general. This is not right. Especially in terms of revolutionary unity, we as the PKK attach great importance to the United Revolutionary Movement of Peoples [HBDH]. We clearly say that the role of the HBDH is not over. On the contrary, the most successful role will be played in the upcoming period. Because the HBDH was established to create a revolutionary alternative and develop revolutionary resistance against the AKP, MHP alliance and its 'Annihilation Plan' that aimed at crushing the Kurdish people, the Freedom Movement. This happened at a time when fascist attacks were taking place in full rein. This has been the logic of the establishment of HBDH since the spring of 2016. Now this process continues and is intensifying. Therefore, the role, mission and function of the HBDH continues. This is our opinion as the PKK.

Have there been mistakes and shortcomings? Of course there have. We should approach this issue self-critically. We should make criticisms in comradely fashion. But we must definitely continue and strengthen the HBDH. We actually had to develop a stronger practice, but there were shortcomings. We had to develop a resistance in the form of spreading the war to all areas, spreading the resistance to the cities, spreading it to the plains, spreading it among the masses, hitting all the targets of fascism. But we only did so to a limited extent.



But this does not mean that there is no need for the HBDH. In the most recent past, the HBDH has been the most resistant organization. Now, it is necessary to develop it further, even to enlarge it. I therefore call on all revolutionaries to unite in an organization such as the HBDH to form a revolutionary unity. This is what is necessary now. Everyone needs to know this. As the PKK, we are fully in favor of such a development and will participate in it. We want revolutionary unity with everyone who wants to wage an active revolutionary struggle. We may have certain differences. But we certainly do not see them as obstacles to our unity and common struggle. Some things have happened and have also had their impact on us. There have been various discussions. We see all this as resolvable. We don't see it as irremediable. We invite all our friends to act more sensitively, more carefully and in accordance with today's requirements. This is very important. Revolutionary unity is important. Without this, other developments cannot take place. We should not rely too much on politics. We should not be satisfied only with the legal domain and legal politics. The developments of the last phase actually happened because there was a revolutionary unity and alliance like the HBDH behind them. Yes, we had difficulties. We made various mistakes, but it was definitely that alliance that has brought this struggle into existence.

On this basis, we invite the HBDH to become an alliance in which all revolutionaries unite, and to do so without delay. We are ready to assume our duty and responsibility, to do our part in creating such a revolutionary alliance. As the PKK, no matter how many difficulties and obstacles we have, we will overcome them and do this.

As for the domain of democratic politics: There is a discussion there too. The main self-criticism came from them first. Immediately after the election, they said that they would evaluate the situation. This was very important. We found this valuable, meaningful and important. And they are continuing with this which is good. But they need to be more careful and also not act too late. We need to make good use of the time. The tempo of the other side is high, fascism continues at a high pace. So the democracy movement should do the same. It should be able to prepare itself according to the needs of the phase. Very hurtful things should be avoided. It is important to be self-critical rather than critical. Yet, so far only few self-critical approaches have emerged. They are good, but there are also criticisms that don't have a proper style, criticisms that don't use a proper language. This is not acceptable. There will probably be more questioning and correction with regards to fundamental issues. We find this very important.

To change society, you need to first change yourself. This is important, but the line along which you change is also important. Of course, we should not make mistakes in this regard. For example, some people have written that the HDP, the Green Left Party is a Kurdish party. This is not true. This is a party of Turkey as a whole. There are different groups in it. It is necessary to make all of those groups become partners. Nobody should not write such wrong things. It is good when all these different groups participate in this process.

There is another correct assessment in this context: Their politics have become too state-oriented. They do politics according to the state. There are shortcomings when it comes to going to society, both with regards to organizing, to listening to the society and to acting together with society. There are problems in reaching out to women, youths and laborers. Such issues are also being brought up by society. This is very important. The Kurdish society is a conscious society.

They shifted politics too much towards the state and became too election-oriented. Some organizations did not play a role. For example, the HDK and the DTK. This is actually an indication of a disconnection

from the masses. These organizations were not functional. There are organizations that are dysfunctional and that are consequently being criticized now. For example, the Democratic Regions Party [DBP] has a name but no role. However, when it was founded, it had a clear mission. Its mission was to develop Kurdish alliances.

The Kurdish alliance can be made more vibrant. But there should be no weakening and no role stealing from each other. It's not as if the role of some people should be relegated to the background. It is important to fully implement the project. Every essence creates its own form and thus comes to life. It does not come to life in a form that does not suit it. So, if we say that the 'Politics of the Third Way' means democratic politics and the democracy of the peoples, then we will develop forms in line with this spirit.

In the most recent phase, the HDP was the force that organized everywhere. The role of both HDK and DBP has decreased. On the other hand, we have also mentioned the issue of alliances. They will probably include the Labor and Freedom Alliance in this process. That is also very important. It is very important to create a common struggle of all the peoples of Turkey and Kurdistan in the field of democratic politics. It is necessary to achieve such an alliance, not only in the form of a left democratic alliance, but as the broadest possible democratic alliance.

The situation of the CHP is obvious. There is no opposition that can be an alternative to the fascism of Tayyip Erdoğan's People's Alliance. The CHP has a certain number of MPs. But this should not be exaggerated too much. What really matters is the democratic opposition formed along the lines of the 'Politics of the Third Way'. This is the democracy movement. Most recently this movement has emerged in the form of the Labor and Freedom Alliance. This alliance needs to be able to include wider segments, all young people, workers, laborers, all religious tendencies, including democratic Islam. Not only an alliance of parties, but an alliance of all organized sections of society needs to be build. And not only that. It is necessary to educate and organize the unorganized parts of society as part of that alliance. It is important that the politics of such an alliance is handled more accurately and strongly, and that it develops itself as an alternative to the current fascist system, as a democratic system. The concrete system can be formed later. We should not insist on achieving this right away. People say that development leads to success. Only by developing a system in a form appropriate to its own essence can there be success and can this success become permanent. We hope this is how things will develop. On this basis, we would like to wish everyone success.

*What do you think about Turkey's new government? What kind of policy will it pursue?*

The other side has set up its own system like a machine. It had obviously prepared itself beforehand. It has set up its own system and is now starting its attacks. Fascism will attack. It will attack at an increasing rate. Undoubtedly, it will attack the PKK first and foremost. It will attack the guerrillas, and it will attack the Kurdish people, their youth and their women. The target is the Kurds. But not only them. Together with them it will attack all the forces of Turkey that fight for freedom and democracy. They are also targets. Therefore, we need to see that fascism will carry out more intense attacks. It will carry out invasion attacks against other parts of Kurdistan. It will carry out attacks of oppression, persecution, arrests, crushing democratic forces and against the Kurds. It will carry out more attacks on women and the young people. It will carry out these attacks militarily. And it will carry out these attacks with the police, economically, politically, and most importantly ideologically. It will use art, propaganda and education for this. Under the AKP-MHP alliance, the Kemalist Turkish Republic does not exist anymore. It has been replaced and a

new state has been established. There is an AKP-MHP state today. And now, a contra force is being added to this alliance in Kurdistan. They are carrying out the biggest attack ideologically. They have created a lot of fake artists and propagandists. They have hundreds and thousands of television channels. They are thus committing a sociocide. Through the media, they are doing everything to change people's mentality, to break and brainwash them, to implant that racist, fascist and Turanist mentality into everyone's minds, this MHP ideology. This is how their supporters have been created.

This is how fascism is being spread. They will carry out all these attacks. This is how they are going to do this. They will try to institutionalize the fascist system. With these attacks, they will try to destroy their opponents completely. They will use every means for their attacks. In diplomacy, for example, they use water as a weapon. Now they are using the water of Kurdistan to negotiate with Syria and Iraq about the Kurdish genocide. And they will do this even more in Iraq.

Erdoğan is using Sweden's entry into NATO as a bargaining chip. He wants to use Sweden's entry into NATO to pull NATO and Europe to his own line. The AKP wants to turn the EU into a regime that accepts the MHP's fascism and gangs. This is very obvious and no one should be mistaken about this. Some people say that Erdoğan formed this government to improve his relations with Europe and the West. When we look at the current government, it is really a government that improves relations with the West. This is how we should understand it. But while improving relations with the West, don't oppress Kurds, women, youth, leftists, socialists and democrats! To the extent that the government crushes them, it will be able to enter into an alliance with the West and improve its relations. The new ministers have already become clear. The chief of the National Intelligence Organization is the new Foreign Minister. And the Chief of General Staff is the new Minister of Defense. Whatever is necessary to ensure self-critical renewal and to resist such an attack, whatever is necessary to carry out an anti-fascist democratic resistance will be done. Nothing else is possible. This is a struggle. There will be more resistance and more struggle. This is what is necessary. We will resist. They will attack to destroy us as a movement and as a people. As part of this resistance, we will also increase our ideological struggle.

In order to defeat the AKP's spread of fascism and the strengthening of Hezbollah among the Kurds, we will increase the mentality, art, literature and propaganda struggle. We will develop the war with new methods and new targets. We will develop the political struggle in every field. There is no other option. We will do this together with our friends and allies. Of course, we will do it as part of an alliance. We will do this in the form of a revolutionary struggle. The field of democratic politics will also take part. It will not be like before. We are also currently discussing many different things. In particular, the field of democratic politics should evaluate the given situation better. They may face new situations. They should be prepared. Now we first discussed how the resistance will yield results. The election emerged as a result of the struggle and strengthened it in the process. Yes, there is a spread of fascism, but more than half of the society in Turkey is against this. All Kurds are against this. Almost all of them are against it except for a handful of contras. Except for the KDP betrayers and Hezbollah sympathizers. It has been revealed clearly that there is great opposition in Turkey as well. We need to acknowledge this. Yes, the election has led to a new government. They are rapidly forming a new government. Using the means at its disposal, this government will mobilize and attack. But looking at it like that, it may seem like the AKP and MHP are getting stronger. But this is not really the case. Nobody should believe this. They are weaker today. The election has revealed certain things, but it has also revealed that there is a large mass against fascism. It has also shown that there is a large mass basis for the resistance against fascism. This is very important.

The AKP-MHP or the People's Alliance government will definitely want to continue its attacks. But they have many weaknesses. There is indeed a significant social segment which revolutionary democratic forces can organize and lead to resist. On the other hand, this government cannot get out of the existing crisis. They shared so much among themselves and widened the People's Alliance. The thieves, pickpockets, profiteers, looters and plunderers among them have multiplied. As they increase exploitation and robbery, of course society will not be able to bear this. The crisis will increase. They will impose war to stop it. But war will deepen the crisis even more. Therefore, they will not be able to get rid of the economic and military crisis. War deepens the economic crisis. This administration cannot overcome this. Therefore, its internal contradictions will remain deep and intense. There is a situation beyond a simple crisis, a situation of chaos. Chaos-level turmoil may emerge in the coming phase.

On the other hand, they talk about diplomatic activities. But they might want to put great pressure on Syria and Iraq. Now the Arab League has stepped in. Iraq and Syria may therefore be able to stand against Turkey. They will form an alliance for the sake of some interests, but this government cannot improve relations with the West and resolve its contradictions, as the liberal circles and AKP supporters claim. The contradictions will continue in various forms. They will also continue with regards to the war in Ukraine. In short, contradictions will continue on a regional and global scale. But the most important thing is the situation of internal contradictions, the situation of crisis, the situation of chaos. Because of all this, the new government will increase its fascist oppression, terror, massacres and intensify the war.

*What kind of dangers will this policy of Turkey's new government entail?*

We have said this before, but I will have to stress this again: Before the elections, we said that if the AKP and MHP come to power again, this will lead Turkey into civil war. Now there is a serious risk of civil war. The CHP is trying to soften this situation, but the crisis and chaotic situation will not be impressed by this. The masses will become more active. In order to mitigate this, the new government will intensify the war in Kurdistan and outside of Turkey, but this time the war will reach Turkey. With his current policies, Tayyip Erdoğan has already left Turkey to the MHP and Kurdistan to Hezbollah. And this will lead Turkey to civil war. In order to keep himself in power, he will lead Turkey into a much more complicated and dangerous situation, with internal and external conflicts with various powers. This danger exists. Everyone needs to recognize this. So, when people oppose the AKP-MHP, they should do so on this basis.

We must prepare ourselves as revolutionaries, democrats, women and youth, workers and laborers and as the force that will lead the struggle. Everyone should definitely take part in the anti-fascist, democratic resistance. In particular, the youth should be organizing its self-defense resistance war in every field against these fascist attacks. The youth must be the activists and militants of the anti-fascist resistance and war. Young people must develop like that. Everybody must be like that. The struggle will become more radical. We must prepare ourselves accordingly. Let no one make any mistakes. Let no one expect anything else from the AKP-MHP or the current alliance. Those who do, will be wrong. Everyone should understand the developments correctly, prepare themselves well and get organized. Let us resist. We will definitely win. If the AKP had been defeated in the elections, a new and long political process would have started. Now, with the new AKP government, the chances of a more radical antifascist, democratic revolution developing and succeeding are greater. The important thing is to push for this. We will strive to realize this. And we invite all our friends to unite and struggle together with us.

# Opinion

## Influence of intelligence in Turkey's foreign policy

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Following the elections, the new cabinet has introduced some changes. MIT's head Hakan Fidan has become the foreign minister, while presidential spokesperson İbrahim Kalın has become the new head of MIT. Is this change just a move to get Fidan, whom Erdogan calls "my confidant", into politics? What was the background of Kalın with intelligence? We will try to find answers to these questions by looking at some events and policies that involved both names.

### MIT in foreign policy

The appointment of Fidan, who organized MIT's operations from Libya to the Caucasus and Syria and made the greatest contribution to intelligence's influence in foreign policy, as foreign minister is consistent with MIT's policy. Because Hakan Fidan first came to prominence following an event that created a crisis in foreign policy. Fidan was one of the key figures in the espionage crisis with Israel in 2013. The Washington Post reported that Hakan Fidan, had exposed 10 agents of the Israeli intelligence service, MOSSAD, to Iran. Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag staunchly defended Fidan against the criticism. Although the Israeli authorities, who made a statement on this issue, said that they were not responsible for revealing the incident to media outlets, Turkey did not deny the allegations.

Editorial writer of Evrensel Newspaper İhsan Çaralan described Fidan's influence in foreign policy: "Maintaining public order with the police force and MIT's influence in foreign policy were seen as a short cut. Thus, intelligence (MIT) started to play a primary role in foreign policy (...) While diplomatic relations with countries such as Iraq, Syria, Iran, Egypt, Israel and Lebanon were either completely cut off or reduced to low-level protocols, relations with the "opposition" religious sects and political circles in these countries increased through the intelligence. The MIT became the main element of foreign policy, at least for the countries in the region after the relations with various Sunni groups and extremist organizations, especially in Syria and Iraq, were carried out through intelligence organization and ordinary diplomacy with states was narrowed down.

### Turkish spies in Libya and MIT trucks

The two most important examples of these activities by MIT that Çaralan mentioned were the MIT employees who died in Libya and the MIT trucks that delivered ammunition to the jihadists in Syria. The ruling AKP and Erdogan maintained relations with the jihadists through the MIT to become the leader of Islam, especially in the Middle East. In particular, the support for jihadist organizations in Syria was provided by the MIT itself.

The MIT trucks that contained military ammunition to be delivered to Syria were stopped in Hatay on January 1, 2014, and in Adana Ceyhan on January 19, 2014. According to the police report, 1,000 howitzers, 1,000 mortar shells, 50,000 machine gun bullets and 30,000 heavy machine gun shells hidden under medical drugs were found inside the trucks. After the scandal, it was denied that there were guns in the trucks. The prime minister of the time, Ahmet Davutoğlu, said that “those trucks were going to the Turkmen,” but Yasin Aktay, the AKP's deputy head of foreign relations, implied that these weapons were sent to the Free Syrian Army that fought ISIS.

After Turkey's mandate to send troops to Libya was passed in the parliament on January 2, 2020, Erdogan said in a speech he delivered in Izmir on February 22: “We have a few martyrs. But let me also say that in reply to our casualties, we neutralized nearly 100 of those legionnaires there.” After Erdogan's speech, the identities of those who died there came to the fore. On February 22, 2020, Yeniçağ newspaper writer Murat Ağırel announced that those who lost their lives in Libya were MIT agents. On February 26, Ümit Özdağ revealed the names of the MIT members in a speech in the parliament. Following the revelation of the MIT members, journalists Murat Ağırel, Barış Pehlivan, Barış Terkoğlu, Hülya Kılıç, Aydın Keser, Mehmet Ferhat Çelik were arrested and tried for the crime of “disclosure of information that should remain confidential concerning the security and political interests of the state and disclosure of information and documents related to intelligence activities”.

## US warned MIT

These are some affairs of the MIT that were reflected in the press, but especially the MIT operations in Rojava and the assassinations in Hewler and Silêmanî show how MIT is engaged in foreign policy. It was claimed that CIA Head William Burns met with Fidan in 2022 and warned about Turkey's air campaign against Syria. The issue concerned Turkey's drone attacks that endangered US military personnel. At that time, Turkey vowed to launch ground operations in Syria, but it did not receive the green light from either the USA or Russia. Unable to obtain permission for ground operations, Turkey also massacred dozens of civilians while launching numerous air operations in Rojava.

When we look at those years when Hakan Fidan, the foreign minister in the new cabinet, served as the MIT head, it is possible to see that Fidan intervened in many regional issues. It is also noteworthy that these interventions were made with ‘hard power’ as defined in international relations. It is possible to add that the regional policy did not involve relations with the West, but with the wider Middle East and the Caucasus. So, what will the foreign ministry of Fidan bring after those years shaped by strategies called neo-Ottomanism, zero problems with neighbours and intelligence through MIT? Will Erdogan follow a foreign policy line that does not focus on the West, but on the wider Middle East after the appointment of Fidan who previously designed the region through MIT? Will Hakan Fidan become an important figure in the new foreign policy following the normalization with Syria and the diplomatic thaw with countries such as Libya and Egypt?

## Soft power or carrot stick

What kind of policy will İbrahim Kalın pursue in this region where Turkey followed a “hard power” strategy supported by the MIT? In 2010 after he replaced Ahmet Davutoğlu as the chief foreign policy advisor to the prime minister, Kalın wrote an article on the concept of ‘soft power’ introduced by Joseph S. Nye, Former US Department of Defence Deputy Minister for International Security Affairs. Kalın translates

this concept as “slight power” into Turkish and says: “According to Nye, there are three ways to achieve something. You either bully, or bribe, or persuade other people. The first means using military methods, and the second means bribing people with ‘carrots’. There are abundant examples of these in the history of humanity and in international relations. Sometimes both can appear at the same time. The Middle East policies of successive American governments are a typical example of this. Well, if you want to convince the other person sincerely, not to deceive them, how do you do it? You can only do this by pursuing fair, smart and credible policies.”

While Kalın defined “slight power” in an article he wrote 13 years ago, when the Syrian war started, he was promoting a foreign policy based on persuasion, not “soft power”, “carrot-stick” or “hard power”. The following years did not justify Kalın in foreign policy. We have just explained above that MIT, which he will now run, maintained its presence in the field with hard power.

### **Germany: SETA promotes AKP under the guise of science and research**

So, how can Kalın, who served in foreign policy, have anything to do with intelligence? After completing his academic studies in history and Islamic philosophy, İbrahim Kalın first served as the founding chair of the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) in 2005 and 2009. The SETA came to the fore both in Turkey and Germany in 2021 after it released a report in 2019. In response to a parliamentary question of the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), the federal government in Germany pointed out that the AKP and the MIT increased their activities in Germany after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. The federal government said that these activities were carried out as an effort to create public opinion through non-governmental organizations, adding that the SETA took part for the first time in Turkey’s intelligence and lobbying efforts. Moreover, another SETA report in 2019 titled “Turkey Extensions of International Media Outlets” targeted journalists in the country. In a reply to a previous parliamentary question posed in 2019 by the Left Party, the federal government revealed that the foundation was funded by the pro-government Albayrak family, adding that Fahrettin Altun, another Erdogan confidant, had worked there before, as well as İbrahim Kalın.

These days, when the cabinet change is being discussed, while Fidan is considered as a figure for the post-Erdogan period, the question remains why Kalın is appointed as the MIT head. However, Kalın is a complementary figure in this task since the MIT has a role in foreign policy, especially in the region outside the West and he is familiar with lobbying and foreign policy issues. Although he rejected a neo-Ottoman strategy and promoted a fair foreign policy, there are strong indications that the relationship between “foreign policy and intelligence” inherited from Fidan will continue.

## ‘Mehmet Şimşek is an advocate of neoliberal market economy and can’t solve the prevailing crisis’

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According to the Turkish Ministry of Finance, a budget deficit of TL 172.7 billion was reported for 2020. In 2021, the figure rose to TL 192.2 billion, and in 2022 the budget deficit was TL 139 billion.

### Erdoğan’s economic preferences

Sezai Temelli, a member of parliament from the Green Left Party, spoke to ANF about the Turkish economy. The politician, an economist with a PhD, pointed out that the economic picture has been shaped according to Erdoğan's preferences and that these preferences are based on the re-appropriation of fascism. “The economic management has really presented us with a disaster scenario until today. Above all, because the economic policies of the last five years were shaped on the basis of fascism, they were the cause of the economic problems we are experiencing today. In other words, today’s economic problems are directly related to the political decisions taken beyond the problems arising from the internal structure of the economy. If we look at this process, Erdoğan’s policy preferences and the path he has taken have brought the economy to this point,” said the Turkish politician, who served as co-chair of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) in the near past.

### War economy and corruption

Temelli further stated: “Yes, some developments in the world, the pandemic and the global crisis have, of course, had an impact, but not enough to explain the situation we are in today. Because if you look at other countries and the world, there is no other country that is experiencing such a deep crisis as Turkey. If you look at the misery index, Turkey is in tenth place. There are countries like Sudan that are ahead of it. This shows us how far poverty and economic collapse have gone. One of the main reasons for this is the institutionalisation of fascism. In order to sustain it, people have relied on the war economy. In addition, corruption has reached unbelievable levels. Turkey ranks among the top five in the world in studies on corruption. And of course, unjust enrichment and haphazard use of the country's resources also play an important role in this ranking.”

### Continuous budget deficit for five years

When asked how sustainable this economic policy is, Temelli replied: “It can only be sustained by wasting all resources. After all, the budget shows how resources are used. The budgets of the last five years have been consistently prepared in such a way as to maintain such an understanding of the economy. Such an understanding of the budget naturally has the characteristic of deepening the economic crisis instead of preventing it. The budget deficit and how it is managed is an important yardstick. In recent times, Turkey has had a constant budget deficit and it has been increasing. This year, there will be a huge budget deficit. The deficit for 2023 will be even higher than in 2022.”



Temelli continued: “How the budget deficit is financed is also important. The budget deficit is financed through inflationary policies. The government tries to cover the budget deficit to a certain extent by collecting from the citizens the taxes it cannot collect from the rich by raising taxes. On the other hand, by printing money through the central bank, it fuels inflation and tries to close the deficit in the treasury. When all this overlaps, both deficit economic policy and this kind of financing fuel the crisis on the one hand and deepen poverty on the other. But of course, the economy does not only have a budget deficit problem. Besides the budget deficit, there is a foreign trade deficit, a current account deficit and a savings deficit. So, it is a multiple deficit and an economy that is under pressure from this deficit. In such a situation, the economy must be disciplined in a very serious way. If disciplining the economy is still an option at the expense of the workers and the people in a situation where poverty is so great and the workers are exploited to such an extent, it means destruction and an unbearable life for the people of the country.”

Temelli added: “As far as we know, there is no prospect of a successful economic policy. In particular, the promises and economic measures during the election campaign have made the situation even more difficult. There seems to be no way out of this situation. There is no political will to do so. Because the continuation of the political line that aims to institutionalise fascism will be with us in the coming period.”

### **Mehmet Şimşek’s priority is the financial markets**

Sezai Temelli believes that an economy led by Mehmet Şimşek to relieve the financial markets will not bring anything to the people and the workers: “Mehmet Şimşek is an advocate of neoliberal policies. Mehmet Şimşek’s priority will be the financial markets. It is about gaining the confidence of the financial markets and opening new loans, new debts, new castles in the air. Does Şimşek know anything about the economy? Of course, he does, but in terms of capital. The answer to the question of how much he knows about the economy in relation to society, in relation to solving the problems we are experiencing, is evident from his practice in the past.”

Temelli concluded: “Mehmet Şimşek and the team of that time have an understanding that the most important pillars that might keep the economy afloat and fight the crisis have been uprooted and put at risk by privatisation and debt policies. Şimşek is one of the most important representatives of the neoliberal market economy. You cannot solve the prevailing crisis with such a mentality. But when it comes to remarketing Turkey, starting a new wave of privatisation, opening new credit taps, this is a message to certain capital groups who want to fix the economy: ‘Look, we are determined’. Even if they bring ten Mehmet Simseks, there seems to be no way out of the economic crisis and this economic collapse we are being dragged into.”



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