

EU TURKEY CIVIC COMMISSION

# 13th International Conference on the European Union, Turkey, the Middle East and the Kurds

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**EUTCC**

**7-8 December, 2016**

Since the beginning of the accession talks on Turkey's membership to the European Union (EU) in 2004, the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC) has been organising an annual conference in the European Parliament to convene leading human rights institutions, political parties, academics, writers, legal experts and prominent Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals to discuss the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and the Middle East. The 13th Conference marked the centenary of Sykes-Picot Agreement which determined the current artificial lines of demarcation between heterogeneous Middle Eastern societies.



The Greens | European Free Alliance  
in the European Parliament



# **13th International Conference on the European Union, Turkey, the Middle East and the Kurds**

**Turkey, the Kurds and the War in the Middle East**

**Turkey—Democracy Suspended  
ISIS and the Crisis in the Middle East**

Brussels, European Parliament  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2016

*In cooperation with*



Kurdish Institute of Brussels



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## Introduction

Since the beginning of the accession talks on Turkey's membership to the European Union (EU) in 2004, the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC) has been organising an annual conference in the European Parliament to convene leading human rights institutions, political parties, academics, writers, legal experts and prominent Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals to discuss the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and the Middle East. The EUTCC monitors and conducts regular audits of Turkey's compliance with the accession criteria, as defined within the meaning of the accession agreements. It also makes recommendations, act as a point of contact, and exchanges information with the institutions of the EU and other governmental and non-governmental organisations, and disseminates accurate, objective information both in Turkey and Europe about the progress made by Turkey, but also about any shortcomings which may still persist.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Conference marked the centenary of Sykes-Picot Agreement which determined the current artificial lines of demarcation between heterogeneous Middle Eastern societies. Even though the Sevres Treaty of 1919 laid out the foundation for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan, the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 frustrated Kurdish national aspirations, leading to the division of Kurdistan between four states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, all of which have adopted and pursued strategies of cultural assimilation and political oppression. Resisting these oppressive patterns, the Kurdish population have demanded the recognition of their identity as a separate ethnic/national entity and aspired to the formation of a democratic self-determining political status within which to protect their distinct culture and identity, as many stateless nations have done.

The 13<sup>th</sup> EUTCC Conference was launched by an opening session with guests of honour such as Mr Ebrahim Ebrahim, a former deputy minister for international relations and co-operation in South Africa and a leading member of the South African National Congress, Ms Gabi Zimmer, Chair of Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), Mr Josef Weidenholzer vice-chair of Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S/D), and Ms Ulrike Lunacek, vice-president of the European Parliament and member of Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Green/EFA). Led by the chair of EUTCC Kariane Westrheim, these talks focused on various types of global democracy, the EU, and Erdogan's assault on the Kurds and other opponents. In addition, messages from the HDP's co-presidents, Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdog, who are imprisoned, were also read out.

The Conference continued with three main sessions. The first panel discussed the consequences of the Sykes-Picot Agreement on the region and the ongoing crisis in Syria. As such, Hamit Bozarslan examined the historic roots of the Kurdish conflict. Discussing the violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Turkey, David Philips argued that the only option for the Kurds is to exercise their right to self-determination. Examining the role of Turkey and its allies in the Syrian crisis, Fehim Tastekin looked at the relation between ISIS and the neighbouring states, especially Turkey. He described the Turkish policy in the region as a failure, while underlining that the Kurdish model offers a viable solution. Looking at the Geneva peace talks on Syria and the Kurds, Kamran Matin criticised the international coalition against ISIS for their failure to embrace Kurdish forces in Rojava, suggesting that the latter should be included in any negotiation which seeks a solution to the current crisis.

The second session highlighted the recent developments in Turkey, and the suspension of democracy by Erdogan, whose aim it is to change the Turkish political system into a one-man administration, resulting in a widespread purge of the Kurds as well as other opposition groups. Salih Muslim explained in detail the Kurdish model in Rojava and the prospect of a democratic Syria. He criticised the interference from regional states, especially Turkey with its wrong-headed policies. Cengiz Candar compared Turkey with the year before, underlining how things have worsened. He typically spoke about the nature of the one-man administration Erdogan has fashioned in Turkey, eliminating all differing voices, journalists, and activists. Devrim Arlsan outlined the range of attacks on Kurdish media, giving a sketch of barred or forbidden news agencies, newspapers, and TV stations. She argued that the Turkish state's attitude is in violation of international law and freedom of press. Simon Dubbins gave a detailed description of their campaign for the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan and underlined the importance of Öcalan's freedom for a peaceful and democratic solution. Hatip Dicle spoke about the Democratic Society Congress and their efforts to achieve a lasting solution. He provided the participants with an eyewitness account of the Turkish state's encounter with the Kurdish movement, and the relation between Öcalan and the Turkish state from 1993 until now. Dimitris Christopoulos highlighted the human rights violations in Turkey, reminding public opinion and related associations of their duties. Ulrike Lunacek, as the vice-president of the European Parliament, approved and welcomed the EP's decision taken on 24 November 2016, which requested the EU to freeze negotiation with Turkey.

In the third session, the Conference discussed the suggestions made by Kurdish, Assyriac, and Yezidi representatives for the promotion of stability, democracy, secularism, womens' emancipation, and religious equality. It also discussed the role of Western powers for a future solution. In this session, Osman Baydemir gave a visual presentation of the elimination of his party and co-mayors, arguing that it stems from the ideology of the Turkish state which defines itself in the denial of Kurdish identity and culture. Michael Rubin highlighted the role of the Kurds in regional stability, urging them to increase their lobbying effort, focusing on both sides of political spectrum. He also underlined the role of European institutions for a political solution. Zubeyir Aydar shared an important item of information about the AKP and MHP coalition's plan to end Öcalan's life. He appealed to everybody, especially the international institutions and governments, to take concrete measures in securing Öcalan's life. He also presented the idea of the Kurdish movement for a new negotiation process. Bill Bowring spoke about international humanitarian law and their application to the ongoing war in Turkey/Kurdistan. He argued that the PKK is involved in an international conflict, and Turkey's action cannot be regarded as a war against terrorism. Metin Rhawi elaborated on self-administration in Rojava and highlighted the position of Christian communities living in northern Syria. He was strongly supportive of the model of democratic federation, underlining the observation of the rights of other religious and ethnic groups in this process. Comparing the Cyprian issue with the Kurdish one, Takis Hadjigeorgiou looked at the impediments on the path to a solution, and called upon the Kurds to learn from their experience. Johannes de Jong spoke about parity of status between religious and ethnic minorities, underscoring the importance of the Rojava model as a viable solution to current crises and criticised Western powers for their lack of support for it. He gave particular attention to the ongoing struggle of women in Rojava and northern Syria.

After the coup attempt of 15 June 2016, the AKP government has turned the ‘state of emergency’ into an excellent opportunity to increase attacks on the Kurds. In sharp violation of the rules of war, it has demolished dozens of Kurdish towns, including Cizre, Sur, Nusaybin, Idil, Geveç, Silvan and Sirnak, during which the army massacred hundreds of people, forcing 1.5 million to migrate. What is more, in the town of Cizre the army burnt 103 civilians alive. Accompanied by these attacks are the increased assaults on Kurdish legal politics and political representatives. Among the arrested are HDP co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, DBP co-chair Sebahat Tuncel, KJA spokesperson Ayla Akat Ata, and Amed Municipality co-chairs Gulten Kisanak and Firat Anlı. Also, many more municipality and council co-chairs, central executive board and party council and party members have been arrested. This wave of assault that the AKP government has launched is intended to prevent the success of the HDP in the coming election. Yet, according to a survey conducted by Eurasia, popular support for the HDP remained over 11% which means the HDP is still the third largest party in the country. *Therefore, the EUTCC Conference calls upon Turkey to release all political prisoners, cease attacks on the Kurds and opposition groups, withdraw all government appointed trustees, and let the co-mayors and other deputies resume their responsibilities.*

As evidenced, the Turkish state’s attacks are not confined to North Kurdistan (south-eastern Turkey) proper as it has expanded to include Kurdish communities in South Kurdistan (Iraq) and Rojava (Syria). More notable has been the Turkish state’s persistent effort at eliminating Kurdish achievements in Rojava which has served as a beacon of light in this part of the world threatened by the darkest force in human history: ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). At the time of ISIS rise, the Turkish government overtly supported this extremist group and turned a blind eye to the fact that Turkey became a transit hub for international terrorists. When ISIS failed to destroy the Kurdish experiments with radical democracy and female emancipation, the Turkish government started to actively interfere in Syria and soon after occupied Jarablus city, from which it has been expanding its occupation southward. Turkey’s operations in the north of Aleppo are also sabotaging the operation launched by the Syrian Democratic Forces in alliance with the US-led coalition to liberate Raqqa from ISIS.

After the abduction and delivery on 15 February 1999 of national Kurdish leader, Abdullah Öcalan, to Turkey, the PKK declared another ceasefire and withdrew its armed forces to South Kurdistan (northern Iraq). Although Kurdish armed forces strictly adhered to the armistice, keeping, for the following five years, their weapons silent, the Turkish state failed to avail itself of this historic opportunity. During the very same period, at the beginning of 2002, the EU and USA blacklisted the PKK, hence, encouraging the Turkish state to emphasise its militaristic approach vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue. Such a move, not surprisingly, frustrated the Kurds as well as peace-loving circles and institutions. As the Brussels Court’s (41<sup>st</sup> Kamer [Correctional Raadkamer] on 3 November 2016) recent verdict made clear the current war in Turkey, according to the Geneva Convention and Rome Statute, “[...] is an armed conflict in the sense of the international humanitarian law”. Therefore, the PKK should be accepted as a party to the conflict, and removed from the “list of terrorist organisations”. This not only reflects the reality about the Kurdish freedom movement, but would also make a significant contribution to peace and a negotiated settlement.

Following 18 years of imprisonment, Öcalan has tirelessly worked for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish conflict. Largely owing to this, the Turkish state has acknowledged him as the “main negotiator”, accepting his proposal for reconciliation. When talks began between Öcalan and the AKP government in 2013, they had continued unabated through to 5 April 2015, with the outcome of a road map consisting of 10 articles. This represented a watershed in the history of the Kurdish conflict and a milestone on the path to the democratisation of the Turkish political structure. Even though the PKK was condemned by certain groups for being so mild, it started the process of withdrawing its armed forces to South Kurdistan. Failing to appreciate these measures, the AKP government disavowed its earlier statements, derailed the entire process, and launched an all-out war against the Kurdish people and their freedom movement. *Against this background, the EUTCC Conference supports the “Freedom for Öcalan Campaign” launched in April 2016 by the major British trade unions, the GMB and UNITE, calling for the release of Öcalan as a major factor for the success of peace process. The Conference, also, calls for the resumption of the peace process.*

Acting in a way contrary to achieving peace, the AKP-MHP circles, according to the information our Conference has recently acquired, are discussing the possible elimination of Öcalan. As has been noticed by a wide range of commentators and analysts, there is little wonder as to why the AKP government has put the reintroduction of capital punishment on the agenda. Even though the Turkish government may dispute or even deny this news, *our Conference is of the opinion that any attack on Öcalan will not only affect the Kurds and Turkey, but will also have an impact on the whole region. For this reason, as well as being a matter of urgency, we are calling for urgent attention to be paid to this threat.*

To conclude, human rights and fundamental freedoms as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitute the core of the United Nations and the EU. Among the primary rights are a peaceful life endowed with dignity, freedom of opinion, freedom of assembly and press, none of which are preserved in Turkey. No peace has been observed, as the Turkish state has launched an all-out war on the Kurdish population, their freedom movement, and their natural environment. Freedom of the press has blatantly been violated as 7 newspapers, 1 magazine, 1 radio station, and 375 associations have been closed down. Additionally, the apprehension of 13 HDP deputies and 56 Kurdish mayors coupled with the replacement of 46 Kurdish municipalities by appointed trustees, have dealt a mortal blow on the freedom of assembly. *In the light of this, the conference call on the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations to support democratic forces and the new democratic society models for peace in the Middle East, and to acknowledge the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava. The Conference also call on the European Union and the European governments to freeze its accession process with Turkey until Erdogan begins to reverse his attacks on democracy and to make it absolutely clear that his suspension of democracy and repression of democratic political opposition must cease immediately.*

# The Opening Speech

Kariane Westrheim

EUTCC chair

Dear Guests of Honour, Patrons, Co-organisers, Speakers and Moderators, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC) I have the pleasure to welcome you to the 13<sup>th</sup> conference at European Parliament. I take this opportunity to particularly thank the interpreters that have been with us for 13 years. This year we can provide interpretation in Kurdish which is a major step forward. Thank you so much!

This conference is open to all political actors from the Kurdish and Turkish side along with individuals, parties and organizations. From 2004 until today the EUTCC conference has established itself as an influential actor in international affairs.

It is 100 years since Kurdistan was divided through the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916. A secret document was put on paper at the end of World War I, by a British officer Mark Sykes and a French diplomat François Georges-Picot. Later, with the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) the borders that were drawn by Sykes and Picot's agreement came into law. The Kurds were promised their territory - a decision that was aggressively opposed by Turkish nationalists. Instead, and in order to hasten the assimilation process thousands of Turks were moved into Kurdish inhabited land. In 1923 the Treaty of Lausanne was signed by the Allied Powers who amended the previous treaty. This treaty set the northern borders of Syria and Iraq resulting in the separation of ethnic groups. The dream of Kurdistan was broken – for a while. Lausanne drew the borders of the present-day Turkey.

Today, nearly 45 million Kurds, and other stateless ethnicities refuse to accept the historic yoke that was laid upon them by Sykes-Picot 100 years ago. But Kurdish history and politics have changed and much has happened. We experience a Middle East on fire—a horrible war is going on—and amid this inferno are the Kurds and peoples in the region. President Erdogan and his regime with its support to ISIS and other extreme Islamic groupings stir around in the chaos with an evil finger both in Bakur (North Kurdistan) and in Rojava-North Syria and other places.

Since the breakdown of the Peace Process between Turkey and the Kurds in 2015, and when the People's Democratic Party (HDP) 7 June the same year surpassed the prohibitive 10 percent electoral requirement at the expense of the governing AKP, the situation has developed from bad to worse. A peaceful solution was put aside; the gross human rights abuses and destruction of the 1990s were again

put in place—just worse. With threats and tricks the AKP regained some of its majority in the snap election held on 1 November. From June 2016, Turkey has destroyed, killed and displaced thousands. According to a KNK briefing paper the attacks continue at full speed. Alongside HDP co-chairs, the AKP-Erdogan have taken hostage the co-chairs of 43 DBP municipalities and seized the will of 46 DBP councils. 50 Co- Mayors are still arrested.

In the aftermath of the so-called coup in July 2016 the AKP-Erdogan regime have conducted several coups against the democratic elected MPs and civilians. The ongoing war is a direct result of the insolubility of the Kurdish question and the irresolution of the political institutions and states who have failed showing a specific and unalterable attitude towards Turkey. Political institutions, like EU, the European council, and NATO did not use the opportunity they had to stop Erdogan's path to power. Now, Erdogan's self-esteem seems limitless.

A peaceful and democratic solution is the only way to peace and stability in Turkey and the Middle East. This will also have an impact on the struggle in the region against Salafi groups such as ISIS. The European institutions must be steady in its pressure against Turkey. The European Union, the US and all international democratic forces must no longer silently watch Turkey's repressive, extra-judicial, and anti-democratic practises but be proactive in implementing a roadmap for a durable peaceful solution. Because the reaction from the EU against Erdogan came late, they could not stop him, and the softer reactions are the more complicated the situation becomes. If this weak political attitude continues Europe must bear some of the responsibility for the consequences of Erdogan's war in North Kurdistan and Rojava.

At the end, we will see a huge dictator arising in front of us who could be extremely dangerous to all of us. The International Coalition against ISIS, primarily the USA, must stand against the anti-Kurdish policies of Turkey and take a proactive stance in the quest for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question. The EU and the USA must finally realise that the PKK is a key party to the solution, and immediately be taken off the terrorist list. Mr. Abdullah Öcalan should be released - at least should his health and security be guaranteed, in order for him to effectively take part in the negotiation process.

This conference should urge the EU, USA and NATO to stop supporting Turkish government and its war against its citizens, to stop Erdogan's support to ISIS and other radical Islamic groups, to stop Erdogan's intervention in Rojava; a democratic diverse autonomy arising in the midst of the crisis - which should be politically acknowledged and actively supported by the US and the EU.

This year's conference will walk in the footsteps of Sykes-Picot Agreement, mapping the situation up to the present; analyse the current situation and the many challenges ahead - the peace process, the role of the international political institutions, crimes against humanity and international justice, the situation in Rojava and self-governance, de-centralisation and co-existence, and of course the situation of Abdullah Öcalan.

This conference is a result of years of co-operation between the EUTCC, The Kurdish Institute of Brussels and our old and new partners at the European Parliament;

The Confederal Group of the European United Left and the Nordic Green Left Group, (GUE/NGL), the The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (The Greens/EFA). I am pleased to mention that the latter is one of our new partners in the EP and Ms. Ulrike Lunacek, who is the Vice-President of the European Parliament, will speak at Panel III. I cannot thank the political groups in the EP enough for the continuing and valuable contribution to the Kurdish cause.

I give a special welcome to the President of GUE/NGL, MEP Ms. Gabi Zimmer from Germany. I need to tell you that you are very special to us Gabi –we share a history - the political groups led by you have for years back shown political and personal support in very difficult times and particular situations. I sincerely hope that our good cooperation will continue it is highly valued and you know how deeply we appreciate this support. Please the floor is yours!

This year I pleased to welcome and heartily thank our new cooperation partner in the EP Mr. Josef Weidenholzer, MEP from Austria, particularly for your personal and political support which we sincerely hope will continue into the future. Mr. Weidenholzer is the Vice-President of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in the European Parliament. It means a lot to the Kurdish issue and the horrible situation we witness in Bakur (North Kurdistan) that you show this support. Kurdish politicians and organisations represented at this conference sincerely hope for international political support and in particular from the EU/EP—this is what you actually offer them by being here today.

The presence of these three groups at the conference shows that there is a growing support within the European Parliament for the Kurdish issue. This support is needed - now more than ever. I also like to acknowledge the Resolution of 4 November by the European Parliament to freezing the Negotiation Process with Turkey, a decision that was particularly supported by these three political groups. This clearly shows that what happens in Turkey is a matter of concern also for Europe. A second thing that shows support from the European Parliament is the decision to award the two survivors of sexual enslavement by the Islamic State, Nadia Murad and Lamiya Aji Bashar, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2016. The ceremony will take place in Strasbourg 13 December.

### **Guests of honour**

I have the great pleasure of introducing our dear Guest of Honor Mr. Ebrahim Ebrahim, the Former deputy minister for international relations and co-operation in South Africa. Mr Ebrahim is member of the African National Congress National Executive Committee. Mr. Ebrahim was a close friend and colleague of Nelson Mandela and his deep and painful experiences with oppression, threats, persecution, and imprisonment under apartheid are not unlike what many Kurdish politicians and civilians face on a daily basis. Your experiences are valuable to the Kurdish cause.

Mr Ebrahim I hope you will share your perspectives with us and perhaps compare them with those of Kurdish politicians, the Kurdish movement and its leader Mr Abdullah Öcalan.

We are so pleased to welcome you Mr. Ebrahim and thank you for your huge support.

**Mr Selahattin Demirtas, MP and Ms Figen Yuksekdag, MP –co-chairs of Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP).**

There are some empty chairs today. For many years, the co-chair of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), Mr. Selahattin Demirtas, member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, have contributed to this conference. The co-chairs of HDP, Ms Figen Yuksekdag MP and Mr Demirtas were targeted by several separate investigations but were arrested for the first time at the beginning of November this year. According to a HDP statement 11 other HDP parliamentarians were also detained as part of the government’s crackdown on its opponents in the wake of the failed coup on 15 July. Turkey is attacking all Kurdish politicians, NGOs, Mayors - 50 co-Mayors are already arrested, in line with civilians and all other kinds of opposition. We fear that Erdogan is preparing for a new plan against the Kurds in Turkey – namely to clear the way for a big massacre.

We urge the MEP and political groups in the EP to keep this in mind and do what they can to stop him.

**The message from HDP Co-Chair Selahattin Demirtas**

Dear Friends,



We are witnessing a time in which the people of the Middle East are going through immense suffering due to violent wars, destruction, and migration. The political and social trauma imposed upon our region by the century-long Sykes-Picot arrangements has reached its peak in this respect. The increasingly polarizing and violent political practices that sovereign nation-states of the region have been pursuing are damaging the hopes of our people who want to get out of this deadlock.

The most blatant example of this is the current oppressive and aggressive policies pursued by Erdoğan’s regime in Turkey --both in its internal and external relations—which seek to destroy the social and political ties that would enable the peoples of this region to co-exist in peace. On the one hand, these policies are totally destroying the already limited democratic life inside the country. On the other hand, the political and military interventions into Iraq and Syria are annihilating the conditions of peaceful coexistence for the peoples of the region.

Dear Friends,

I salute you all with my uncompromising belief in freedom, peace, and justice. I wish I were with you today, among friends and comrades, to discuss the hopes and future of the Middle East. I would like to express my warmest regards to the organizers of the conference; to the EUTCC,

the Socialist (S/D), the Greens-EFA and the Left groups (GUE/NGL) at the European Parliament, and also thank President Martin Schulz for his hospitality. I have personally met and exchanged ideas and concerns with most of you about the worsening political situation in Turkey. Unfortunately, our worries came true.

The arrests of HDP deputies, co-mayors and politicians and the deepening crisis in the Middle East are not independent of each other. Our arrest, the likes of which can only be seen under coup-d'états or dictatorial regimes, will never deter us from our rightful struggle. Our struggle for freedom and peace will prevail even when we are in prison. No matter which part of the world they are from, our friends' trust and solidarity with us will strengthen our struggle.

Considering your conference as a significant opportunity to critically assess, understand and act upon the developments in Turkey and the Middle East, I send my warmest greetings and wishes to all the speakers and the participants of the conference.

**Selahattin Demirtaş**  
**Edirne F-type Prison**  
**December 2, 2016**

### **The message from Ms Figen Yüksekdağ, Co-Chair, HDP**

Esteemed conference participants,



Since November 4, I have been imprisoned by the Erdogan regime together with 9 other of my parliamentary friends because of the democratic struggle we continue to pursue as the HDP. I am communicating my message to you orally through my lawyers since prison authorities are censoring or confiscating my letters under orders from the Ministry of Justice. Conveying my message behind the bars and under the pressure of censorship as an elected parliamentarian is just one of the many dictatorial practices of the regime in Turkey. Our

raison d'être is to defend our oppressed peoples who have been Other-ed by this very regime.

I understand that this conference organized by EUTCC will also discuss squarely the coup attempt that took place and still continues in Turkey and evaluate its impact on the Middle East and Europe. I would like to assure you that political movements like the HDP will continue to be the hope against the totalitarian regimes of the region, particularly Erdogan's regime, who staunchly clings to the old Sykes-Picot order, and maintain the struggle of freedom and democracy that has been rising in Rojava, Kurdistan and Turkey until the day of victory.

I wish success and send my regards and love to all conference participants.

**Figen Yüksekdağ**  
**Kocaeli F-Type Prison No 1**

At the moment, there are serious concerns for the co-chairs and deputies' security and even lives in prison. Turkey tries to silence the powerful voices of Selahattin Demirtas, co-chair Figen Yuksekdag, and hundreds of others. With our help, they will not succeed; the voices and messages from our next Guests of Honor are carried forward by millions of Kurds and international politicians and supporters. Let us take a moment and listen to Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag strong message from prison!

I heartily thank our Guests of honour for their great contribution to this conference – you are never forgotten!



**Kariane Therese Westrheim** is a professor of Educational Sciences at the University of Bergen, Norway, and is the chairwoman of the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC). Her research focuses on issues of multiculturalism knowledge construction within political movements and education in areas of war and conflict.

Among her publications are “Taking to the Streets! Kurdish collective actions in Turkey”, “Choosing the Mountains: The PKK as alternative knowledge and identity project”, and “Prison as site for Political Education: Educational experiences from prison narrated by members and sympathizers of the PKK”.

Besides her academic work, Westrheim has been active in several delegations monitoring Turkey's compliance with EU accession criteria and the political situation in Turkey and Bakur (North Kurdistan) in particular. Westrheim visited Rojava-North Syria in 2015 as part of a fieldwork. She has been denied entry to Turkey since February 2009

# **The Middle East, the Kurds and their Fight against Terrorism**

Ebrahim Ebrahim

I am a South African. I come from a country that experienced centuries of colonial oppression and exploitation, decades of brutal racial exclusion, and the denial of fundamental rights under apartheid.

It is also a country that produced Nobel laureates such as Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Chief Albert Luthuli, as well as distinguished freedom fighters such as Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Joe Slovo, and Dr. Yusuf Dadoo.

Our struggle for liberation was led by the African National Congress which will mark its 105 years of existence next month. Many people the world over predicted that our liberation in South Africa would be accompanied by a very violent revolution with much death and destruction.

But we achieved a relatively peaceful transition from a racist apartheid system to a non-racial, non-sexist democratic South Africa. It is underpinned by a constitution regarded as amongst the best in the world.

Other than dealing with transitional justice and reconciliation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we created a society that was all inclusive, and guaranteed that the state, and I quote, “may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly on any one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth.”

It is argued by some that the concept of a nation-state is “based upon exclusion through the notion of one nationality, one country, one language.” One could probably add, “a single set of values, dominant religion, and cultural hegemony.” In France, you have to accept French values, and in some Eastern European countries the dominance of the Christian religion must not be tampered with. It has been argued that nation states exclude a large portion of their citizens.

By contrast, a democratic secular state must be all- inclusive and not discriminate against national groups on the basis of whether its citizens are Arabs or non-Arabs, Turks or Kurds, Sunnis or Shiites, Christians or non-Christians.

South Africa is a melting port of different racial, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups. That is why we have 11 official languages in our country. We are a constitutional democracy and our constitution states inter alia, “Persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguist community may not be denied the right, by other members of that community,

- (a) To enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language, and
- (b) To form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society.’

Our experience in South Africa has relevance to the struggle of the Kurdish people in the Middle East, who continue to suffer under oppression and discrimination.

The crisis in the Middle East today has highlighted the plight of the Kurdish people. Dispersed like homeless people and left to the mercy of oppressive regimes, for over a century the Kurds have sought to establish their national identity. They have fought for their fundamental right to practise their culture and speak their language.

Foreign interference by the big powers in the Middle East as witnessed by the bombing of Iraq and the proxy war in Yemen have produced the likes of AL Nursa and ISIS.

We will learn more today about terrorism and the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, and its implications for the Kurdish people.

Article 222 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations, embodied the right of colonial people - including those of Palestine, Kurdistan and others - to sovereignty and independence on the principle of the right of self-determination.

Over four decades of struggle the Kurds endured execution, brute force, imprisonment, banishment and persecution. With increasing suppression of their legitimate demands, their organization the PKK embarked on armed resistance.

We in South Africa followed a similar path of armed resistance when all avenues of peaceful non-violent resistance were brutally suppressed, and all avenues of dialogue were completely shut.

Nelson Mandela established under his leadership an armed wing of the ANC called Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) in 1961. As revolutionaries, we did not target innocent civilians, and sought to garner support from all sections of the South African population and the international community.

However, Mandela was described by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as a terrorist. It has tended to be the practice of the West to label the cadres of genuine liberation movements as terrorists.

The Turkish Government has used the crisis in the Middle East to brutally clamp down on all progressive opposition forces and the Kurdish people in that country. We see a three-pronged attack carried out by Erdogan's government against the Kurds. They have intensified the attack on the Kurds in Iraq, in Syria and in Turkey.

Internally the government has clamped down on the legitimate Kurdish parliamentary opposition – the Peoples' Democratic Party, or HDP, which is the third largest political party in parliament. The government also removed the immunity that MPs usually have from prosecution from HDP members. Since then, party members have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, police raids and travel bans.

Using this year's failed coup as a pretext, the government has declared a state of emergency, and according to the Socialist International, more than 110,000 officials have been detained or suspended. More than 130 journalists have been detained, several hundred have had their press cards confiscated, and over 150 media outlets have been closed down. Just six weeks ago the authorities stormed the office of the mainstream Cumhuriyet newspaper, arresting 15 members of staff, including its editor-in-chief.

This casts a dark shadow of increasing totalitarianism and dictatorship in Turkey. We deplore the arrest of Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, the co-chairs of the People's Democratic Party. Demirtas recently visited South Africa and met with the ANC and its alliance partners.

Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, was en route to South Africa to seek political asylum offered to him by Nelson Mandela in February 1999. His mission was frustrated when he was kidnapped by certain intelligence agencies and handed over to Turkey. Ocalan was tried and sentenced to death by a semi-military court.

The European Court of Human Rights found that his trial before the tribunal in Turkey was unfair. His sentence was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment, and he has not been allowed access to his lawyers for the last four years, nor allowed family visits for the last two years.

As a matter of interest, in my own case I was abducted from a neighboring country – Swaziland – in 1986 by the apartheid security forces, tried for high treason, and sentenced to an additional 20 years imprisonment, and sent to Robben Island for the second time.

The South African court of appeal ruled in 1991 that my abduction from a foreign country was illegal, and therefore the court had no jurisdiction to try and sentence me. This case has become an important study for law students studying international law.

Many Kurds believe that Abdullah Ocalan is to the Kurdish people what Nelson Mandela was to the oppressed people of South Africa. The comparison may not be completely accurate, but we believe that Ocalan could contribute to the peace process in Turkey, which is vital for the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

It is also important for the Turkish government to resume the peace process with Abdullah Ocalan and work towards a peaceful political settlement between the Kurdish and the Turkish people. As we learnt from our own experience in SA, in the end there is no military solution to conflict. It is only through negotiation and discussions that a solution can be found for ongoing conflicts.

The international community should demand the immediate release of Demartis, Yuksekdag and all other detainees. We should demand the immediate release of Abdullah Ocalan and the resumption of peace negotiation with Ocalan and other representatives of the Kurdish people. We must strive to work towards a peaceful negotiated resolution to the conflict in the Middle East even those of the Palestinian people based on freedom and equality for all.

Thanks!



**Ebrahim Ebrahim** joined the liberation movement in 1952, and participated in the Congress of the People Campaign. He was active in all the campaigns of the 1950's, and after the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1960; Ebrahim joined the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto We Sizwe in 1961. He was arrested in 1963 and charged under the sabotage act and sentenced to 15 years on Robben Island. He was released in 1979, yet banned and restricted to his

home town in Durban.

In 1980, Ebrahim went into exile, operating from the frontline states bordering South Africa, and was responsible for the political underground based in Swaziland. In December 1986, he was kidnapped from Swaziland by the South African Security Forces and detained in South Africa where he was severely tortured. He was charged for high treason and sentenced to a further 20 years imprisonment on Robben Island. In 1991, the appeal court ruled that his kidnapping from a foreign country was illegal, and that the South African court had no jurisdiction to try him. He was subsequently released from prison in early 1991 and was elected to the National Executive Committee of the ANC. During the CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) negotiations, Ebrahim was tasked by the ANC to establish the Patriotic Front, which consisted of over 93 organisations. Ebrahim was elected a member of the National Assembly of Parliament in 1994. In August 1997, he was elected Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Ebrahim resigned from Parliament in July 2002 to take up the position of the Senior Political and Economic Advisor to the Deputy President of South Africa. Between 2003 and 2009 Ebrahim was involved in a number of conflict resolution initiatives around the world. In May 2009, he was appointed the Deputy Minister of International Relations, a position he held until 2014. He is presently the Parliamentary Counsellor to the President of South Africa.

**The following three MEPs, representing the main cooperating groups, the co-organisers of the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference, welcomed the guests in their opening speeches in which they also referred to the latest EP resolution (please see the introduction).**



**Gabi Zimmer** is the President of the GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament. She was born on 7 May 1955 in Berlin. She acquired in 1977 a University degree (language mediator for English and Russian) from the Faculty of Applied and Theoretical Language Studies (TAS) at the University of Leipzig. After graduation, Gabi became administrator and later editor in Suhl motor vehicle and rifle factory. From 1986 to 1989 she had been Party Management Assistant at the Party executive committee of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany). Between 1990 and 2004 she was a member of the in 1990 to 1998 Chairperson of Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) in Thuringia; between 1996 and 2000 Vice Chairwoman of PDS; from 1999 until 2000 Chairwoman of PDS in the Thuringian Parliament; from 2000 until 2003 Chairwoman of PDS (In 2007 the PDS merged with the Labour and Social Justice – The Electoral Alternative, WASG, to form DIE LINKE); since 2004 member of the European Parliament; since March 2012 Group chair of the GUE/NGL (United European Left/Nordic Green Left) in the European Parliament; since 2014 she has been the leading candidate for DIE LINKE at the European elections.



**Josef Weidenholzer** is professor of social policy and since 1998 director of the Institute for Social Policy at the Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria. He is the President of Volkshilfe Österreich and the European NGO platform ‘Solidar’. Prof. Weidenholzer is a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from Austria’s Social Democrat Party.



**Ulrike Lunacek** has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2009, where she is currently serving on the Committee on Foreign Affairs as well as on the Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. In July 2014, Ulrike Lunacek was elected Vice- President of the European Parliament.

Between 1983 and 1995 she gathered professional experience as interpreter, journalist and project coordinator in NGO's on development cooperation, feminist and LGBT policies. From 1996-1998 she was Secretary General of the Austrian Greens, she became Member of the Austrian Parliament in 1999, and from 2006 till 2009 she was Co-Chair of the European Green Party. Lunacek studied English-Spanish-German for the interpreter's degree at the University of Innsbruck, where she graduated with Maga. Phil. (B.A.) in 1983.

# **Accountability for Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Turkey**

David Philips

## **Summary**

A commission of inquiry is proposed to investigate violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law in Turkey. The commission of inquiry would gather facts and, as necessary, recommend a court to conduct a criminal investigation. It would advance human rights by providing a historical record of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Ensuring accountability is fundamental to deter future violations and provide redress for victims. The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the best body to establish a commission of inquiry. If the UNHRC is unable to act, the Council of Europe (CoE), supporting cases brought to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with support from a non-binding resolution of the European Parliament (EP), could take the lead.

## **Pattern of Abuses**

Targeting civilians has intensified, in response to the failed military coup in Turkey (15 July 2016). More than 125,000 purported oppositionist-- judges, administrators, journalists, teachers, and human rights – have been arrested or dismissed. Kurdish civilians have also been targeted. Whole towns and cities, such as Şırnak, Cizre, Nusaybin, and the district of Sur in Diyarbakir, have been turned to rubble. For example, ten Kurds were shot by Turkish troops in Cizre on January 20, 2016. A video of the Cizre killings went viral, raising concern. The Cizre incident is part of a pattern of atrocities under the guise of fighting terrorism.

## **State Responsibility**

In January 2016, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Raad al-Husseini urged Turkey to conduct a “thorough, independent, impartial investigation.” Zeid emphasized, “If State operatives commit human rights violations, they must be prosecuted.”

Turkey can fulfill its state responsibility by announcing the establishment of a national commission of inquiry consistent with its obligation in international law. To be credible, the national commission of inquiry must be transparent, independent and well resourced. The commissioners and experts would be persons of high moral standing, and internationally respected. The commission will require independence, access, and full support of the government to conduct a credible investigation.

To date, however, Turkish authorities have refused to set-up a national commission of inquiry. Nor is it likely that Turkey would agree to a commission of inquiry. The commission would have a mandate to investigate the government, which is itself responsible for crimes.

Zeid said in September 2016, “I have requested access to this area for a comprehensive independent assessment by my staff. But...that access has not been granted. We have therefore set up a temporary monitoring capacity based in Geneva, and we will continue to inform this Council of our concerns.” Zeid demanded “unfettered access to the south-east by a team from OHCHR.”

### **The UN’s Role**

Within the UN, investigative bodies have been established by the Security Council, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It would be suitable for the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to consider Cizre and other incidents in Turkey. To advance this goal, the UNHRC could adopt a resolution, calling on Turkey to investigate. The resolution would require Turkey to report its findings back to the UNHRC. If Turkey continues stonewalling, the UNHRC can endorse a UN fact-finding mission. The fact-finding mission would look into what happened and potentially recommend a commission of inquiry to investigate further.

The commission of inquiry could propose action by the International Criminal Court (ICC). According to the Rome Statute, which was adopted in 1998, the ICC is mandated to investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity and genocide as well as war crimes. Either territorial jurisdiction or personal jurisdiction must exist for an individual to be prosecuted by the ICC. Therefore, an individual can only be prosecuted if he or she has either committed a crime within the territorial jurisdiction of the Court or committed a crime while a national of a state that is within the territorial jurisdiction of the Court. Since Turkey does not belong to the ICC, the most likely way for cases to reach the ICC concerning events in Turkey would be through a referral from the UN Security Council (UNSC). Realistically, however, the UNSC is unlikely to support ICC action against Turkey.

Alternatively, *ad hoc* or special tribunals could address the situation in Turkey. Relevant experience is instructive. For example, the UNSC established *ad hoc* tribunals for the former Yugoslavia in 1993 and the *ad hoc* Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1994.

Special tribunals were established through agreements between the United Nations secretariat and the countries concerned with jurisdiction over the crimes in question, after approval and authorization by the UN General Assembly (UNGA). Special tribunals include the East Timor Tribunal (1999); the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (2001); and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (2002). Some were independent, free-standing bodies with little supervision by the UN (e.g. East Timor). The Cambodia tribunal functioned as a hybrid tribunal with the host country’s judicial system. The tribunals were required to meet international juridical standards, including independence from political interference. They were expensive. In the case of the Cambodia tribunal, the UN did not authorize its work until funds were raised for the first two years of operations.

Politics are a limiting factor. ICC action or the establishment of an *ad hoc* tribunal would require UNSC approval. Special tribunals require UNGA authorization and concurrence with

the affected country. The likelihood of UN involvement is remote. An alternative international organization is needed to take the lead investigating and potentially prosecuting perpetrators in Turkey.

### **European Union**

EU Member States would prefer involvement by the UN. They would not want to do anything to undercut the ICC. Given its investigative powers, however, the EP could set-up a temporary committee of inquiry. There is precedent. The EP created a committee of inquiry to investigate mass surveillance of EU citizens by US agencies. It also established a Committee of Inquiry into Money Laundering, Tax Avoidance and Tax Evasion, whose work is ongoing. EP involvement would be limited to breaches of Union law or improper administration in the application of Union law.

The EP could also adopt a resolution supporting the CoE to create a commission of inquiry. Turkey is a Member State of the CoE. A CoE commission of inquiry would be undertaken in conjunction with individual cases brought against Turkey at the ECHR, despite Turkey's non-conformity with the ECHR under the current extended state of emergency. The proposed investigation would complement the mandates of other European bodies concerned with Turkey. Involvement by the EP or the ECHR would come after UN options were exhausted.

### **Terms of Reference**

A commission of inquiry must have clearly defined terms of reference. Notionally, it would have jurisdiction over genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity crimes committed by state actors and other fighters. It would be concerned with a set of crimes occurring in a specific territory and over a specific period of time. Its mandate would include: (i) investigating whether violations are systematic and widespread; (ii) reporting on the State's ability to deal with violations; and (iii) considering the root causes of the situation. The commission of inquiry would produce a historical record, rendering an opinion on whether violations of human rights law and/or humanitarian law have occurred. Creating a mechanism with authority over all parties anticipates charges of bias.

### **Civil Cases**

The measures herein proposed would not derogate civil law suits. A group of German lawmakers and rights activists have recently filed a civil lawsuit against Erdogan for alleged "war crimes" committed in ongoing military operations in the Kurdish populated southeast of the country. Lawyers filed the brief with Federal prosecutors in Berlin as "an ethical obligation" to bring charges in Germany against Turkey for war crimes. The complaint also mentions former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu and other top officials from the government, military and police.

### **Political Context**

An investigation would occur within the broader context of EU-Turkey relations. The EC "EU Turkey Progress Report" (9 November 2016) expressed concern about the rule of law and backsliding of fundamental freedoms. The report highlighted "legislative amendments

introduced by decree.” It discussed the “derogation from [Turkey’s] obligation to serve a number of fundamental rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights.” The report noted, “very extensive and surprising dismissals, arrests, and detentions” after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. The crackdown “affected the whole spectrum of society with particular respect to the judiciary, police, gendarmerie, military, civil service, local authorities, academia, teachers, lawyers, the media and business community.” It noted that “private companies were shut down, their assets seized or transferred to public institutions.” Turkey was criticized for lifting the “law on the immunity of deputies leading to the arrest and detention of HDP co-chairs,” as well as “human rights violations and the disproportionate use of force in the southeast” targeting civilians. The European Parliament voted to freeze talks with Turkey on EU membership (24 November 2016).

The EU-Turkey statement on refugees and migrants is another matter for consideration. The EU must not allow itself to be held hostage over a deal that is illegal, impractical, and unethical because of “refoulement.”

### **Conclusion**

A commission of inquiry would serve several purposes, including conflict prevention. It would send a clear signal to Turkey’s leaders, potentially deterring future crimes. In the future, it may result in the set-up of a tribunal that would hold perpetrators accountable. In conjunction with EUROPOL, an arrest warrant and red cards could be issued for Erdogan and members of his inner circle. Accountability measures would rally proponents of the rule of law in Turkey, embolden Turkish civil society, and signal an end to Turkish exceptionalism by the international community.



**David L. Phillips** is currently Director of the Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights. He has served as Foreign Affairs Expert and as Senior Adviser to the U.S. Department of State and as Senior Adviser to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Phillips has worked at academic institutions as Executive Director of Columbia University’s International Conflict Resolution Program, Director of American University’s Program on Conflict Prevention and Peace-building, Fellow at Harvard

University’s Future of Diplomacy Project Fellow, Visiting Scholar at Harvard University’s Centre for Middle East Studies, and Professor of Preventive Diplomacy at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna.

Phillips was Deputy Director of the Centre for Preventive Action at the Council on Foreign Relations, Senior Fellow at the Preventive Diplomacy Program of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, and Project Director at the International Peace Research Institute of Oslo. Phillips has also been a foundation executive, serving as President of the Congressional Human Rights Foundation and Executive Director

of the Elie Wisel Foundation for Humanity. He has been an analyst and commentator for NBC News and the British Broadcasting Company. He is author of *Liberating Kosovo: Coercive Diplomacy and U.S. Intervention* (Harvard's Kennedy School/MIT Press), *From Bullets to Ballots: Violent Muslim Movements in Transition* (Transaction Publishers), *Losing Iraq: Inside the Post-War Reconstruction Fiasco* (Westview/Perseus Books), and *Unsilencing the Past: Track Two Diplomacy and Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation* (Berghahn Books). Phillips has also authored dozens of policy reports and hundreds of articles in leading publications such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, and *Foreign Affairs*.

## **The Role of Turkey and Its Allies in Syrian Crisis**

Fehim Taştekin

The rightful demands of people for a change have surrendered itself to a bloody process in a short period of time. The sins of the regime aside, we need to take a look at the actors who claim to be friends of Syria. It is of course a very late consideration. Rather than democratisation of the system the main aim for these actors were to bring this country on to their knees as it stood as disjointed to the global order. It is why the opposition demonstrations which commenced with peaceful language were quickly contaminated with religious sectarian language and weapons. The roles of the Gulf States such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar are major just as those of Turkey and Western Alliance.

It primarily needs reminding that a bankrupt method which is tried in Afghanistan with Pakistan's logistical, Saudi's financial; CIA's organisational support is repeated in Syria after 30 years. The jihadist global mobilization has presented the world with the gifts of Al-Qaida, Taliban and Tehrik-i Taliban. The only thing that was different in the case of Syria is that Turkey and Jordan assumed the role of Pakistan.

The jihadists left over from Afghanistan were marched into the Syrian battlefields together with the new recruits. They were all considered to be revolutionaries in the eyes of Turkey and their friends. Turkey was hosting the revolution that was happening at its neighbour and came forward with the aim of organising both civilian and militaristic wings of the opposition.

I have witnessed tonnes of lies as a journalist and a lot can be said in here, however, our time here is limited. We could for example start by correcting the lie surrounding the claim that the actors in Syria aimed at establishing democracy but the moderates have later lost the initiative to the jihadists. This would be a good springboard for correct thinking approach. The jihadists were involved in Syria right from the early days of the rebellion and there are many examples of the religious sectarianism from then on. I will mention an example that concerns Turkey here.

On 3 June 2011, an incident took place in Jisr al-Shughur where 123 members of the security forces were killed. Their arms and legs were chopped and their corpses were thrown into the Asi River or buried in mass. The bullets used by so called revolutionaries unfortunately had the hallmarks of Turkey. Fake heroes were created out of that massacre and they were then turned into the officers of the Free Officers Movement and Free Syrian Army.

Great many actors with an unbelievable nativity expect from us to believe in Gulf States whom allegedly have most advanced democracies to make the efforts of bringing democracy into Syria.

This dirty intervention has brought nothing but root holding of hundreds of dangerous organisations, the death of hundreds of thousands of people and millions of people becoming

refugees. It also caused destruction and pillage of historical civilisation sites, towns and looting of industrial cities such as Shayk Najjar. All these operations amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, crime of looting and pillaging and crime of supporting terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaida.

The process on the other hand gave birth to two models; one is the dark model of ISIS and the other one the democratic autonomy in Rojava.

Turkish Government which favours ISIS preferred to start a war against Kurds who leads movement of autonomy. Turkey which started a proxy war against Kurds and Syrian administration in July 2012 has switched its hostility against Kurds since October 2014. It is inevitable to open a parenthesis to mention that Turkey's support for ISIS can be grouped under 4 different categories:

1. ISIS has been treated as revolutionaries by Turkey only due to virtue of fighting against Syrian Administration.
2. ISIS has been treated as a useful organisation when it attacked Rojava and was supported.
3. ISIS was treated as unwanted organisation when it fought against Turkey and Gulf States.
4. ISIS was the engine of revolution when it fought against the Maliki Regime in Iraq, the AKP administration only saw them as angry bunch of Sunni kids.

Turkey was motionless against ISIS when they captured 3 gates on Turkey's borders, it made no noise. The border gates were kept closed but border crossing was tolerated with an attitude of keeping a blind eye. The wheel of militant and materials crossing was not disturbed even though the telephones of the border Emir were being tapped to by Turkey. ISIS was treated with a blind eye when it set up cells in different cities of Turkey. This even went as far as non-intervention on ISIS members who were watched and who committed terrorist acts in Turkey. Ankara only joined the international coalition after being singled out as a country supporting ISIS and this was done in a mood of heel dragging and had no choice but to take some precautions. Turkey went on records as reluctant when it opened its Incirlik Base against anti-ISIS operations. The red line drawn by Turkey when it said "YPG cannot cross to the west of Euphrates" only served to the benefit of ISIS staying longer at the borders. Turkey had to start the Euphrates Shield after being forced into it, after being told to either to wipe out ISIS or allow Syrian Democratic Forces that are led by Kurds. The aims of Euphrates Shield were 4 dimensional:

1. To erase the image of being the country that supports ISIS.
2. To prevent Kurds from clearing the area between Afrin and Kobane and spread the model of democratic autonomy. The government forces were relating to this as Kurdish Corridor and it was a manufactured fear. It served nothing but favouring ISIS.
3. To create an actual buffer zone filled with armed groups and displaced persons.
4. To create a breathing pipe for the groups which are stuck in Aleppo.

Turkey's policy on Syria is currently focused on crushing the democratic autonomy movement. They have already given the signal of shaking hands with Assad just for the sake of finishing Rojava off. Rojava is met with such violence and animosity just because it held a mirror to the internal faults of Turkey which it could not deal with. Rojava contains provocative elements for Turkey as a country that failed to make peace with Kurdish population, failed to recognise the rights of Alawi citizens, a state that has not put out a hand to its Christian minorities and a failed state on facing the realities of the victimisation that is suffered historically and contemporarily by these peoples.

The whole issue is about answering the following question. What will be the situation of Kurds on this side of the line whilst the Kurds on the other side of the line establish autonomy where the guaranteed rights such as right to education in mother tongue and recognition of their cultural rights? There is no doubt that the Kurds in Turkey will not accept a status that is lesser than the ones on the other side of the line. This reality is the reason that causes sleeplessness to some circles.

Turkey however has poisoned its relationships with its own Kurds by declaring war against Rojava. Rojava has two-dimensional effect on Turkey when considered under the angles of geography, history and current factors. Had a friendship or alliance been fostered with Rojava than this would have opened the process of finding a solution to the problems with the Kurds in Turkey. When considered from the reverse angle had Erdogan not kicked the table by saying "I do not recognise the Dolmabahce Reconciliation" than the approach to Rojava would have been different. In another word a peace achieved with Kurds of Turkey would have made it easy to digest the realities of Rojava and recognition of Rojava would have made it easy to achieve peace with Kurds internally. The success of a model in Rojava that recognises the ethnic and religious minorities would have inspired the area where the dominance of singularity is taking place. Thus, it is fair to say that Turkey has made error after error when it tried to be a model and convert the Middle East and has now even lost its own path at home. It swung to a dictatorial path where it bombs its own cities and silences its dissent.



**Fehim Taştekin** is a journalist based in Istanbul. He was born in Oltu, Erzurum. He was graduated from Faculty of Political Sciences of Istanbul University, and studied at Institute of Middle East and Islamic Countries of Marmara University. He is currently a columnist at Al Monitor and Gazete Duvar. Previously he worked for several newspapers including Yeni Şafak, Yeni Ufuk, Tercüman, Radikal and Hurriyet.

Also, he founded the Agency Caucasus in 2000 and has Taştekin has been TV host at IMC TV for four years. He published three books titled "Syria: Cave in, hang in!", "Rojava: Time for Kurds" and "As Darkness Fell (ISIS: History of Violence in the Name of Religion)". He is also an analyst specializing in Turkish foreign policy, Caucasus, Middle East and EU affairs.

# **The Geneva Peace Talks on Syria and the Kurds**

Kamran Matin

Syria's catastrophic civil war has entered its sixth year. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have lost their lives or injured and millions more displaced. The country's infrastructure is in ruin and its social fabric has disintegrated. And yet, all attempts at a peaceful resolution of the conflict have so far failed.

In fact, the prospects of a negotiated peace appear even more remote since it might be argued that following its recent victories in Easter Aleppo the Assad regime might be less interested in a negotiated peace.

However, these victories, as significant as they might be, cannot possibly lead to a return to pre-2011 situation restoring the Ba'ath regime's effective control over the whole of Syria's population and territory.

Given the depth of enmity that separates the government and a large portion of the Syrian population, the scale of Syrian state's resources, and the size and number of the opposition groups and their foreign backers any long lasting peace could only be achieved through some form of peace process. This is also the general lesson of the past cases of civil wars across the world.

As we all know there have been many peace initiatives and actual negotiations over the past five years or so. From the first peace proposal by the Arab League in November 2011 to the Geneva III peace conference in February 2016 there have been at least thirteen peace talks and ceasefire initiatives but none of them has been successful in terms of its own stated goals.

Here I don't have time and space to consider the structural and conjunctural reasons for the failure of the previous peace negotiations. Rather, I want to focus on one counterintuitive feature that all previous peace talks have had in common, namely, the exclusion of the Kurds and their main political parties and representatives.

The main reason for the consistent exclusion of the Kurds from various peace initiatives is well-known: Turkey's open diplomatic and geostrategic blackmailing of the UN and western powers involved in the peace initiatives. Unfortunately, thus far both the UN special envoy for Syria and the US and its coalition partners has succumbed to Turkey's pressures.

The fact that the exclusion of the Kurds is detrimental to the peace process is obvious: no conflict can possibly be resolved when a major party to that conflict is absent from the negotiating table.

But rather than elaborating on the negative impact of the Kurds' exclusion from Geneva peace talks and previous peace initiatives I'd like to argue what positive impact their inclusion might have on any future peace talks.

Most peace initiatives to end civil wars face two main challenges: convincing the combatants to accept and implement a peace settlement; and designing credible guarantees on the terms of the agreement.

Academic research shows that the second element, that is, implementation guarantees, are actually the more important element and often more difficult to address not least because they need external assistance.

Given the complexity of the Syrian civil war, the multiplicity of combatant groups and the number of external states with a stake in the conflict a conventional sequential approach to these two elements is likely to be rather difficult.

In other words, belligerent parties are unlikely to agree on a peace settlement before a clear mechanism of implementation is developed. And no implementation mechanism will be developed or seen as credible by all sides unless a peace settlement is clarified and agreed upon.

The logical question of this circumstance is that in Syria's case the two stages of the peace process, that is, peace settlement and implementation guarantees, have to be combined into a single process.

This would be similar to the basic framework of the successful negotiations between Iran and P5+1 over Iran's nuclear project according to which all parties agreed that 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed upon'.

So, the question is how exactly can the presence of the Kurds in the Geneva peace talks or any other future peace initiative facilitate this process?

In my opinion the answer primarily lies in the basic political vision for a future Syria that Syrian Kurds offer; a vision that is now being practically implemented in large parts of Northern Syria through the political framework of 'Democratic Federal System of Rojava – Northern Syria'.

The democratic federal system that Syrian Kurds in close collaboration and consultation with other ethno-cultural communities inhabiting Rojava have developed is marked by four main features: decentralisation of power, formal recognition of Syria's ethno-religious diversity, gender equality, and bottom-up, local self-administration.

This model of governance therefore enshrines democracy at political, cultural, societal, and gender levels. As such democratic federalism stands in stark contrast to Syria's current

unitary, centralised, and ethnicised state which is by definition politically undemocratic, culturally repressive, and administratively over-centralised. More importantly, these features are arguably the root causes of not only the current tragic conflict in Syria but also of the systemic crisis and unprecedented levels of violence that have engulfed much of the Middle East.

Now, to return to the original question why this vision for Syria's future can enhance the prospects of a peace settlement?

It seems to me that it can do so because the Kurdish model of democratic federalism addresses the main concerns of all sides through a structural devolution of power to different regions and districts of varying territorial scale. And perhaps more importantly it minimises the medium and long-term role of external actors in relation to the implementation of the peace settlement.

This is crucial because arguably the main reason for the failure of the previous peace efforts has been not just the vagueness of the substantive content of the proposals for the future shape of Syria as a political entity but also lack of effective and credible implementation guarantees. Such guarantees have been very difficult to provide precisely because the potential external guarantors, i.e. the majority of the foreign and regional backers of the Syrian regime and different opposition groups, have rather divergent interests and aims and hence unlikely to commit to any concrete mechanism of implementation before maximising their strategic gains. This latter circumstance has been the primary reason for the failure of previous peace initiatives and the continuation of the conflict.

By developing and implementing a de-centralised form of self-administration based on councils of varying scales culminating at cantons different ethno-religious and linguistic communities inhabiting different parts of Syria are empowered to run their own affairs through local and regional political and administrative structures that have high levels of autonomy but remain part of a radically democratised Syria as a sovereign and united, but not unitary, state.

Such a system therefore immediately removes two major fear factors that many observers have identified as the main reasons for the continuation of the conflict: the Alawite community's fear of being subject to a Sunni majoritarian rule that can easily degenerate into a majoritarian despotism repressive of cultural and national diversity as the examples of Turkey, Iran, and, post-2003 Iraq, clearly shows.

And equally importantly, it also minimises the fear of the Sunni majority of a return to the Ba'athist form of a brutal and arbitrary form Alawite minoritarian autocracy.

Clearly this process is not entirely self-driven and a degree of international monitoring and assistance is required especially at the early stages. But this is likely to be minimised since

under the democratic federalist model the scope and practical task of implementation itself are sub-divided and delegated to the actual stake-holders.

In short, Rojava's experience of democratic federalism and its exemplary practice of peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence and popular self-governance can bring to the negotiating table precisely those substantive ideas and inspirations that have so far been absent from the attempted peace initiatives.

For this to happen European Parliament, other EU organs, and influential western states ought to take necessary steps to ensure the genuine representation of Syrian Kurds and their legitimate political representatives in any future peace talks on Syria.

Thank you for your attention!



**Kamran Matin** is an associate professor of international relations at the University of Sussex, Brighton. Since September 2016 he has been a member of the Steering Committee of Middle East and North Africa Centre at Sussex (MENACS) and Co-editor of Palgrave series Minorities in West Asia and North Africa (MIWANA). Since September 2014 he has been a Co-Convenor of Historical Sociology Working Group of The British Society for International Studies (BISA). Since May 2011 he has been a member of the Management Committee of

Centre for Advanced International Theory (CAIT). Since October 2010 Matin has been a Co-founder and co-convener of Sussex Uneven and Combined Development Working Group.

Kamran has been a member of Editorial Review Board of the journal of Kurdish Studies, Programme Committee of the 10th Biannual Conference of the International Society for Iranian Studies (ISIS), Montréal, Canada, August 6-10, 2014; International Studies Association (ISA); British International Studies Association (BISA); International Society of Iranian Studies (ISIS); BISA Colonial, Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies Working Group 3. Among his major publications are *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development over the Longue Durée* (Rowman & Littlefield). *Recasting Iranian Modernity: International Relations and Social Change* (London & New York: Routledge).

# The HDP's Political Vision for A Democratic Turkey

Osman Baydemir

Osman Baydemir's speech was delivered in the form of a power-point presentation which gives a broad outline of the current state of affairs in Bakur (North Kurdistan-Turkey) and Turkey. Delineated is an overview of the Turkish state's purge on the Kurdish movement from July 2015 until now. Since then, Turkish president, Erdogan, and his AKP government have terminated all the dialogue they had been engaged with Kurdish representatives, including Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan, and launched an all-out war against them.



**Institutions Closed by  
12 Decree Laws  
After The July 15  
Coup Attempt**

**Piştî Teşebisa Derbeyê  
Ya 15ê Tîrmehê,  
Saziyên Ku Bi 12  
Biryardnameyên Di Hikmê  
Qanûnê De Hatî Girtin**

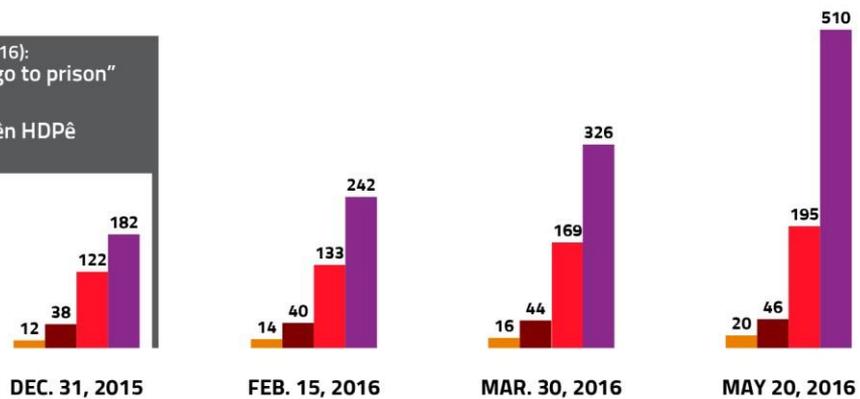
Universities / Zanîngeh -	15
Associations / Komele -	1325
News Agencies / Ajansên Nûçeyan -	5
TV Stations / Televîzyon -	15
Radio Stations / Radyo -	22
Newspapers / Rojname -	56
<b>Total Number of Closed Institutions Yekûna Saziyên Ku Hatî Girtin -</b>	<b>2614</b>
<b>Number of Dismissed Civil Servants Yekûna Kesên Ku Ji Kar Hatî Avêtin -</b>	<b>79.006</b>

**Number of Immunity Dossiers Tabled at the Planary (Jan. - May 2016)  
Hejmara Dosyeyên Parêzbendiyê Yê Di Lijneya Giştî De Hatî Gotûbêjirin**

AKP MHP CHP HDP

Mr. Erdogan (Jan. 2, 2016):  
"HDP MPs should go to prison"

Erdoğan (2.1.2016):  
"Divê parlementerên HDPê  
têxine girtigehan"



Statement  
of  
Trustee

Bilançoya  
Qeyûman

102  
DBP

2014 Local Elections  
Hilbijartina Herêmî ya 2014an

54

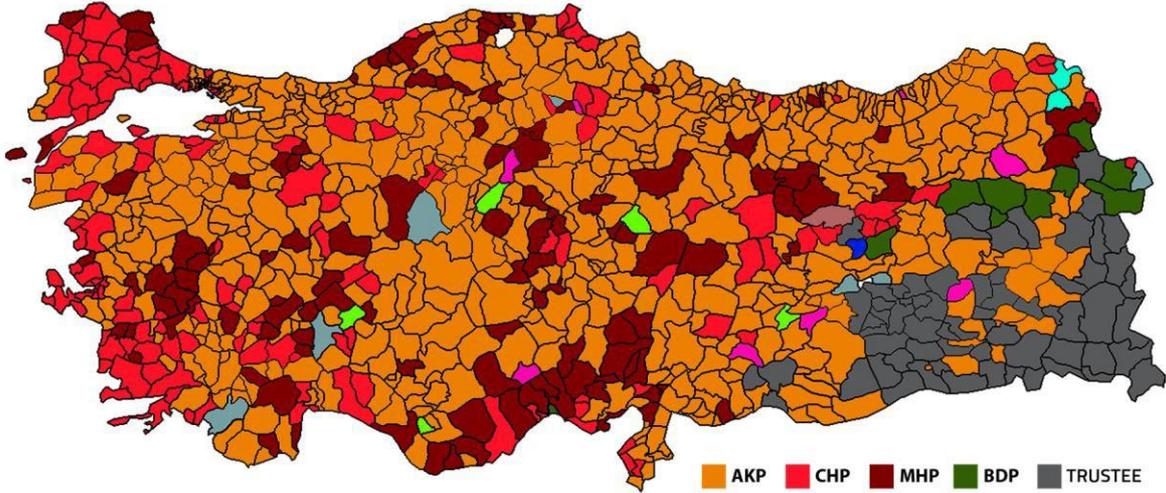
After The Appointed of Trustee  
Piştî Erkdarkirina Qeyûman

48

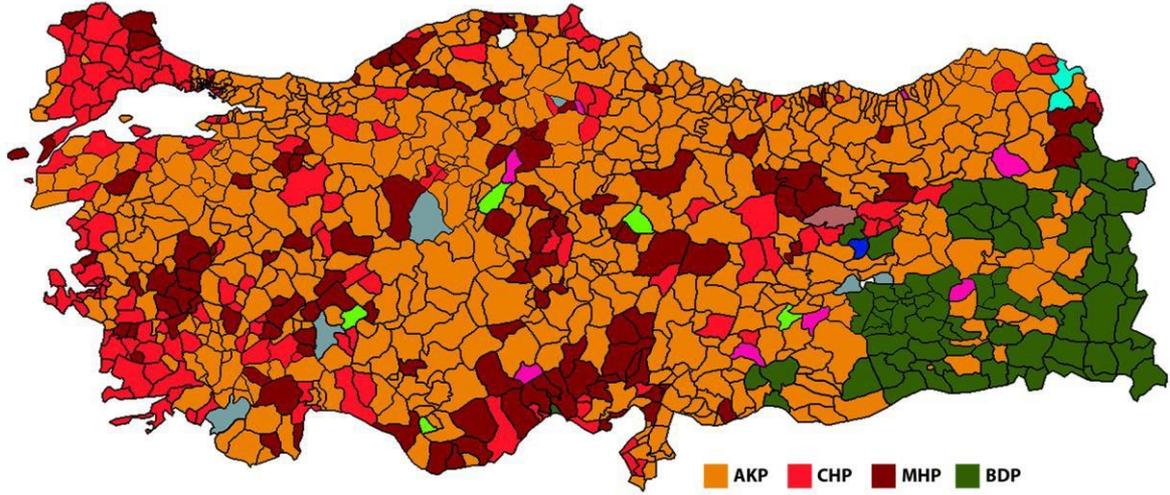
TRUSTEE &  
DE FACTO TRUSTEE

DBP

## December 2016 Local Governments Map Nexşeya Rêveberiyên Herêmî ya Berfanbara 2016an



## March 2014 Local Governments Map Nexşeya Rêveberiyên Herêmî ya Adara 2014an



## Socio-Economic Indicators Rêjeya Aborîya Civakî





CIZRE



NUSAYBİN



SUR



ŞIRNAK



Cemile Çağırğa (13) - Sep. 6, 2015



Miray İnce (3 months old) - Dec. 25, 2015



Taybet İnan (50) - Dec. 18, 2015



Selamet Yeşilmen (44) - Nov. 15, 2015

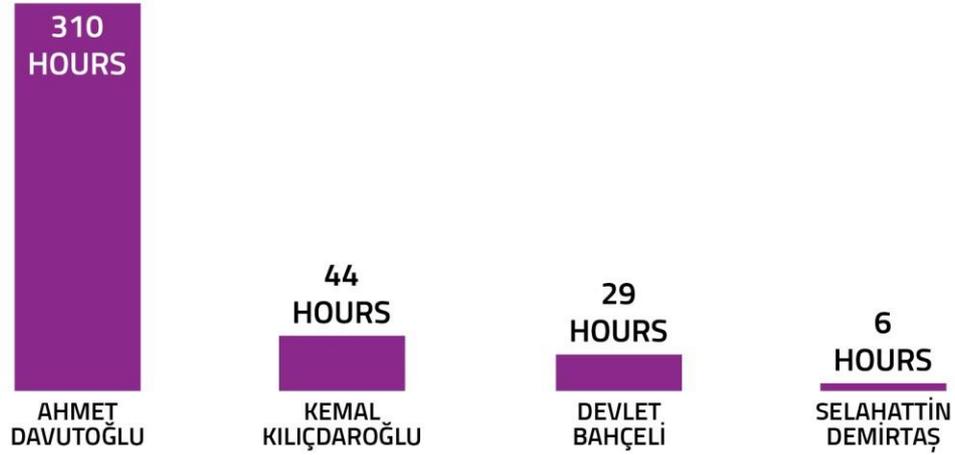


## Statement of Curfew

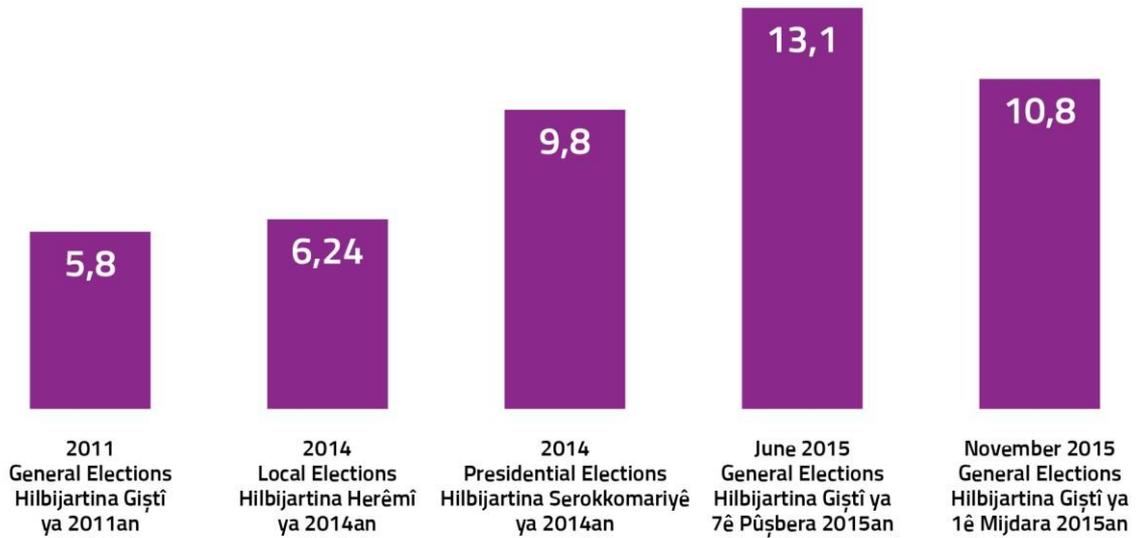
CITY	NUMBER OF CURFEW	LAST CURFEW	CASUALTIES	CURRENT SITUATION
CİZRE	5	DEC. 14, 2015	291	PARTIAL IN PROGRESS
SİLOPİ	2	DEC. 14, 2015	68	PARTIAL IN PROGRESS
SUR	6	DEC. 02, 2015	91	IN PROGRESS
İDİL	1	FEB. 16, 2016	72	PARTIAL IN PROGRESS
NUSAYBİN	7	MAR. 13, 2016	156	PARTIAL IN PROGRESS
YÜKSEKOVA	6	MAR. 13, 2016	101	PARTIAL IN PROGRESS
ŞIRNAK	1	MAR. 14, 2016	76	PARTIAL IN PROGRESS

Before November 2015 elections, the live broadcast length of political party leaders on 12 national and local television channels including the public broadcaster TRT, between 1-31 October.

Serokên partiyan siyasi, berî hilbijartina 1ê Mijdarê, di navbera 1-31ê Cotmehê de, TRTê jî di nav de di 12 kanalên netewî û herêmî çiqas cih girtin.



### HDP Election Results Under The Co-Presidency of Selahattin Demirtaş Hilbijartinên Ku Di Hevserokatiya Giştî Ya Selahattîn Demirtaş De Pêk Hatine



## Imprisoned Co-Mayors from Kurdish Region by Turkish Government

*Data Compiled by Union of Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities (GABB)*

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date of Arrest</b>	<b>Prison</b>
1	Mr. Harun Erkuş	Co-Mayor of Lice, Diyarbakır	08/05/2015	Diyarbakir D Type, Diyarbakir
2	Ms. Dilek Hatipoğlu	Co-Mayor of Hakkari	08/25/2015	Sincan Women's Prison, Ankara
3	Mr. Nurullah Çiftçi	Co-Mayor of Hakkari	08/25/2015	Kırıkkale F Type, Kırıkkale
4	Ms. Handan Bağcı	Co-Mayor of Özalp, Van	10/11/2015	Erzurum E Type Prison, Erzurum
5	Mr. Ali Çam	Co-Mayor of Hoşhaber, Iğdır	25/03/2016	Kırıkkale F Type, Kırıkkale
6	Ms. Diba Keskin	Co-Mayor of Erciş, Van	15/10/2015	Sincan Women's Prison, Ankara
7	Mr. Abdurrahman Çagan	Co-Mayor of Erciş, Van	29/04/2016	Van M Type Prison, Van
8	Mr. Rahmi Çelik	Co-Mayor of Bulanık, Muş	11/02/2016	Rize L Type Prison, Rize
9	Ms. Figen Yaşar	Co-Mayor of Bulanık, Muş	23/04/2016	Muş E Type Prison, Muş
10	Mr. Burhan Kocaman	Co-Mayor of Karakoçan, Elazığ	02/10/2016	Elazığ E Type Prison, Elazığ
11	Ms. Cennet Ayık	Co-Mayor of Karakoçan, Elazığ	02/10/2016	Elazığ E Type Prison, Elazığ
12	Mr. Kasım Ağgün	Co-Mayor of Hoşhaber, Iğdır	05/03/2016	TBA
13	Ms. Zeynep Şipçik	Co-Mayor of Dargeçit, Mardin	31/03/2016	Sincan Women's Prison, Ankara
14	Ms. Seyran Ağran	Co-Mayor of Beytüşşabap, Şırnak	10/06/2016	Sincan Women's Prison, Ankara
15	Mr. Abdulkerim Erdem	Co-Mayor of Derik, Mardin	26/02/2016	Kırıkkale F Type, Kırıkkale
16	Ms. Sebahat Çetinkaya	Co-Mayor of Derik, Mardin	26/02/2016	Sincan Women's Prison, Ankara

17	Ms. Hazar Aras	Co-Mayor of Diyadin, Ağrı	05/03/2016	Erzurum E Type Prison, Erzurum
18	Ms. Aygün Taşkın	Co-Mayor of Ergani, Diyarbakır	07/05/2016	Sincan Prison, Ankara
19	Mr. Hüsnü Beşer	Co-Mayor of Yüksekova, Hakkari	15/04/2016	Hakkari Prison, Hakkari
20	Mr. Nazmi Cuşkon	Co-Mayor of Hakkari	27/04/2016	Van M Type Prison, Van

### **Imprisoned Co-Mayors from Kurdish Region by Turkish Government**

*Data Compiled by Union of Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities (GABB)*

21	Mr. Şerafettin Özalp	Co-Mayor of Özalp, Van	15/07/2016	Gümüşhane E Type Prison, Gümüşhane
22	Ms. Nevin Oyman Girasun	Co-Mayor of İdil, Şırnak	24/08/2016	Midyat M Type Prison, Mardin
23	Mr. Mehmet Muhdi Aslan	Co-Mayor of İdil, Şırnak	25/09/2016	Midyat M Type Prison, Mardin
24	Mr. Ahmet Toloğ	Co-Mayor of Silopi, Şırnak	03/09/2016	Şırnak T Type Prison, Şırnak
25	Mr. Mehmed Muhdi Aslan	Co-Mayor of İdil, Şırnak	26/09/2016	TBA
26	Ms. Tülay Karaca	Co-Mayor of Tekman, Erzurum	29/09/2016	TBA
27	Mr. Abdurrahman Zorlu	Co-Mayor of Hani, Diyarbakır	01/10/2016	Diyarbakır D Type Prison, Diyarbakır
28	Ms. Zilan Aldatmaz	Co-Mayor of Saray, Van	01/10/2016	Van M Type Prison, Van (erzurum?)
29	Ms. Gültan Kışanak	Co-Mayor of Diyarbakır	31/10/2016	Kandıra F Type Prison, Kocaeli
30	Mr. Fırat Anlı	Co-Mayor of Diyarbakır	31/10/2016	Kandıra F Type Prison, Kocaeli
31	Ms. Suna Atabay	Co-Mayor of Çaldıran, Van	02/11/2016	Sincan Women's Prison, Ankara

32	Mr. Ahmet Demir	Co-Mayor of Ovakışla, Bitlis	31/10/2016	Bitlis E Type Prison, Bitlis
33	Ms. Servin Karakoç	Co-Mayor of Ovakışla, Bitlis	31/10/2016	Bitlis E Type Prison, Bitlis
34	Mr. Nuri Akman	Co-Mayor of Sirtk�y, Őırnak	08/11/2016	TBA
35	Ms. Sabite Ekinci	Co-Mayor of Varto, MuŐ	10/11/2016	MuŐ E Type Prison, MuŐ
36	Mr. Tuncer Bakırhan	Co-Mayor of Siirt	16/11/2016	Bolu F Type Prison, Bolu
37	Ms. Nurhayat Altun	Co-Mayor of Tunceli	17/11/2016	Kocaeli F Type Prison (no.1), Kocaeli
38	Mr. Mehmet Ali Bul	Co-Mayor of Tunceli	17/11/2016	Kocaeli F Type Prison (no.1), Kocaeli
39	Mr. Kadir Kunur	Co-Mayor of Cizre, Őırnak	16/11/2016	Őırnak T Type Prison, Őırnak
40	Mr. Bekir Kaya	Co-Mayor of Van	17/11/2016	Silivri F Type Prison (No. 9), Istanbul
41	Mr. Ahmet T�rk	Co-Mayor of Mardin	24/11/2016	Silivri F Type Prison (No. 9), Istanbul
42	Ms. Nevin TaŐdemir	Co-Mayor of Bitlis	25/11/2016	TBA
43	Mr. H�seyin Olan	Co-Mayor of Bitlis	25/11/2016	TBA

### **Imprisoned Co-Mayors from Kurdish Region by Turkish Government**

*Data Compiled by Union of Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities (GABB)*

44	Mr. Mehmet Emin �zkan	Co-Mayor of G�roymak, Bitlis	26/11/2016	TBA
45	Ms. Senaye Ata	Co-Mayor of G�roymak, Bitlis	26/11/2016	TBA
46	Mr. Halis CoŐkun	Co-Mayor of Malazgirt, MuŐ	28/11/2016	TBA
47	Ms. Meymune S�nmez	Co-Mayor of Malazgirt, MuŐ	28/11/2016	TBA

**List of Appointed Trustees in DBP-led Municipalities as of 08/12/2016 Data gathered by GABB (Union of Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities)**

	<b>City - Province</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Popular Vote for the DBP</b>	<b>Name Appointed Trustee &amp; His Title</b>
1	<b>Batman Municipality</b>	557K	55,89%	Şeref Aksoy- Deputy Governor
2	<b>Hakkari Municipality</b>	275K	66,83%	Coney Epçim- Deputy Governor
3	<b>Diyadin Municipality - Ağrı</b>	43K	48,43%	Mekan Çeviren- District Governor
4	<b>Beşiri Municipality - Batman</b>	30K	50,45%	Mustafa Maslak- District Governor
5	<b>Gercüş Municipality - Batman</b>	20K	52,43%	Ünal Koç- District Governor
6	<b>Silvan Municipality- Diyarbakır</b>	86K	69,55%	Murat Kütük- District Governor
7	<b>Sur Municipality- Diyarbakır</b>	121K	54,41%	Bilal Özkan- Deputy Governor
8	<b>Hani Municipality - Diyarbakır</b>	33K	45,8%	Yusuf Turhan- District Governor
9	<b>Hınıs Municipality - Erzurum</b>	29K	39,08%	Bülent Ay- District Governor
10	<b>Tuzluca Municipality - Iğdır</b>	24K	51,67%	İbrahim Civalek- District Governor
11	<b>Dargeçit Municipality- Mardin</b>	27K	60,16%	M. Yaşar Yeşiltaş- District Governor
12	<b>Derik Municipality - Mardin</b>	62K	64,4%	M. Fatih Safitürk - District Governor
13	<b>Mazıdağı Municipality - Mardin</b>	33K	61,71%	Halit Benek- District Governor
14	<b>Nusaybin Municipality - Mardin</b>	116K	78,78%	Ergün Baysal- District Governor
15	<b>Bulanık Municipality - Muş</b>	83K	45,84%	Ömer Şahin - District Governor
16	<b>Eruh Municipality - Siirt</b>	20K	52,37%	Murtaza Dayanç - District Governor
17	<b>Suruç Municipality - Şanlıurfa</b>	102K	52,58%	Tarık Açıkgöz- District Governor
18	<b>Cizre Municipality - Şırnak</b>	133K	81,61%	Ahmet Adanur - District Governor
19	<b>Silopi Municipality - Şırnak</b>	115K	78,19%	Savaş Konak - District Governor
20	<b>İdil Municipality- Şırnak</b>	73K	78,9%	Ersin Tepeli- District Governor
21	<b>Edremit Municipality - Van</b>	114K	50,91%	İbrahim Özkan- District Governor
22	<b>Erciş Municipality - Van</b>	172K	49,43%	M. Şirin Yaşar - District Governor

23	<b>İpekyolu Municipality - Van</b>	275K	48,32%	Önder Can- Deputy Governor
24	<b>Özalp Municipality - Van</b>	71K	71,62%	Serdar Karal - District Governor
25	<b>İkiköprü Municipality- Batman</b>	4K	56,22%	Mustafa Maslak- District Governor
26	<b>Hoşhaber Municipality- Iğdır</b>	2K	61,75%	Bilgehan Karafil- Deputy Governor
27	<b>Diyarbakır M. Municipality</b>	1800K	55,10%	Cumali Atilla - District Governor
28	<b>Ovakışla Municipality- Bitlis</b>	4K	37,46%	Bülent Tekbıykoğlu- District Governo
29	<b>Şırnak Municipality</b>	490K	71,1%	Turan Bedirhanoğlu- Deputy Governor
30	<b>Varto Municipality</b>	32K	63,4%	Mehmet Nuri Çetin- District Governor
31	<b>Tunceli Municipality</b>	86K	42,4%	Olgun Öner- Deputy Governor
32	<b>Siirt Municipality</b>	320K	49,4%	Ceyhun Dilşad Taşkın - Deputy Govern
33	<b>Van Metropolitan Municipality</b>	1096K	53,1%	İbrahim Taşyapan - Governor of Van
34	<b>Mardin Metropolitan Municipality</b>	796K	52,2%	Mustafa Yaman- Governor of Mardin
35	<b>Sırtköy Municipality- Şırnak</b>	2K	61,1%	Ersin Tepeli - District Governor
36	<b>Bitlis Municipality</b>	67K	43,9%	Ahmet Çınar - Governor of Bitlis
37	<b>Güroymak Municipality- Bitlis</b>	46K	48,1%	Ufuk Özen Alibeyoğlu- District Govern
38	<b>Malazgirt Municipality- Muş</b>	54K	39,19%	Soner Kırılı - District Governor
39	<b>Kızıltepe Municipality - Mardin</b>	237K	62,5%	Ahmet Odabaş - District Governor
40	<b>Karayazı Municipality- Erzurum</b>	29K	62,1%	Kamil Aksoy- District Governor

41	<b>Kayapınar Municipality- Diyarbakır</b>	309K	54,6%	Mustafa Kılıç - District Governor
42	<b>Yenişehir Municipality- Diyarbakır</b>	207K	50,1%	Mehmet Özel- District Governor
43	<b>Çukurca Municipality - Hakkari</b>	17K	54,2%	Mehmet Mut - District Governor
	<b>Total Population Affected</b>	5.8 Million		

*Data Compiled by Union of Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities (GABB)*

**Number of Personnel Dismissed by the Turkish Government in DBP-led Municipalities via Decree No. 678 Issued on 22/11/2016**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
Artuklu Municipality	Mardin	2	24	26
Atabağı Municipality	Siirt	2	3	5
Bağlar Municipality	Diyarbakır	7	16	23
Batman Municipality	Batman		2	2
Beşiri Municipality	Batman		1	1
Bismil Municipality	Diyarbakır		1	1
Bitlis Municipality	Bitlis		3	3
Cizre Municipality	Şırnak	2	5	7
Çınar Municipality	Diyarbakır	5	19	24
Çukurca Municipality	Hakkari		2	2
Dargeçit	Mardin	2	16	18
Derik	Mardin	2	18	20
Dicle Municipality	Diyarbakır		7	7
Edremit Municipality	Van		1	1
Eğil Municipality	Diyarbakır	1	3	4
Ergani Municipality	Diyarbakır	4	5	9
Eruh Municipality	Siirt		8	8
Esendere Municipality	Hakkari	1		1
Hakkari Municipality	Hakkari		18	18
Hazro Municipality	Diyarbakır		2	2
Hınıs Municipality	Erzurum		3	3
Hizan Municipality	Bitlis		1	1

Iğdır Municipality	Iğdır	1	3	4
İdil Municipality	Şırnak		1	1
Karakoçan Municipality	Elazığ	1		1
Karayazı Municipality	Erzurum		1	1
Kayapınar Municipality	Diyarbakır	13	44	57
Kızıltepe Municipality	Mardin	10	55	65
Kulp Municipality	Diyarbakır	1	2	3
Lice Municipality	Diyarbakır		2	2
Malazgirt Municipality	Muş		1	1
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
Mardin Metropolitan Municipality	Mardin	19	160	179
Mazıdağı Municipality	Mardin	3	8	11
Nusaybin Municipality	Mardin	10	65	75
Ömerli Municipality	Mardin		3	3
Savur Municipality	Mardin		9	9
Siirt Municipality	Siirt	6	33	39
Silopi Municipality	Şırnak		6	6
Silvan Municipality	Diyarbakır	1	18	19
Sur Municipality	Diyarbakır	4	12	16
Şemdinli Municipality	Hakkari		2	2
Şırnak Municipality	Şırnak		5	5
Tunceli Municipality	Tunceli	1	5	6
Van Metropolitan Municipality	Van		4	4

Varto Municipality	Muş		4	4
Veysel Karani Municipality	Siirt	1		1
Yenişehir Municipality	Diyarbakır	2	13	15
Yeşilli Municipality	Mardin		1	1
Yüksekova	Hakkari	3	17	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>103</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>734</b>

**Important Notification I:** Due to municipal system in Turkey, majority of municipal personnel carry out municipal services through working for contractor firms, officially. In all municipalities, number of personnel working through sub-contractors but also holding their permanent jobs even if the firms changes is always higher than number of personnel officially at payroll of municipalities. Information above only reflects data for the dismissed personnel who were at payroll of municipal bodies not at contractors firms. Real number of municipal personnel dismissed is considerably higher than figures above. Nevertheless, municipalities which were appointed a trustee by the government don't share information with the GABB about actual number of personnel dismissed through contractor firms.

**Important Notification II:** Municipal personnel dismissed by the government are not being offered any compensation and severance pay. Moreover, dismissed personnel are also being deprived of healthcare rights as well as employee personal benefits.

**Important Notification III:** It is highly likely that process of dismissing municipal personnel will continue in near future via decrees to be issued.

*Data Compiled by Union of Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities (GABB)*

<b>Number of Personnel Dismissed by the Turkish Government in DBP-led Municipalities via Decree No. 678 Issued on 22/11/2016</b>	
Ağrı	1
Batman	3
Diyarbakır	184
Hakkari	45

Iğdır	4
Kars	2
Mardin	419
Muş	5
Van	6
Total	669



**Osman Baydemir** is a Kurdish politician, lawyer and human rights activist in Turkey. Osman graduated from the Law Faculty of Dicle University in Amed (Diyarbakır). In 1995, he became the chair of the Amed branch of the independent Human Rights Association. Between 1995 and 2002 Baydemir was also a board member and became vice-president of the association. In 2001, he became a founding member of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT or TİHV).

In 2004, Baydemir was elected Mayor of Diyarbakır where he served two terms. Mr. Baydemir was elected to Turkish Parliament on Peoples' Democratic Party's ticket from Kurdish province of Urfa in June 7 elections of 2015.

## Appeal to Join and Support the ‘Freedom for Öcalan’ Campaign

Simon Dubbins



Simon’s speech focused on a campaign launched by Unite the UNION and GMB for freedom of Mr Abdullah Öcalan. He argued that Öcalan’s release will not only facilitate a lasting solution to the Kurdish question, but will also help bring about stability to the Middle East. Below is the content of their campaign.



27<sup>th</sup> July 2016

### **Re: Appeal to join and support the ‘Freedom for Öcalan’ campaign:**

Dear Colleagues,

As you will no doubt be well aware the situation in Turkey has deteriorated dramatically in recent months. The Turkish government is now effectively at war with its own Kurdish population and is brutally clamping down on all opposition activities and civil society organisations.

UNITE and the GMB have become closely involved in building urgent solidarity with the Kurds and all progressive forces inside Turkey. Following delegation visits to the region and through discussions with local groups on the ground we are now totally convinced that a peaceful solution to the current conflict will only be found if the jailed Kurdish leader

Abdullah Öcalan is freed and allowed to play a full role in the development of a new peace process.

To this effect on April 25<sup>th</sup> of this year UNITE and GMB, two of the biggest trade unions in the UK, together with a number of sympathetic MPs, launched the 'Freedom for Öcalan' campaign and we are now looking for your support.

Öcalan has the support of the Kurdish people as is clearly demonstrated by the fact that over 10 million people signed a petition last year calling for his release. He has called consistently for a democratic resolution within Turkey to secure a peaceful and lasting solution and if that could be achieved, it would have huge ramifications for other parts of the region.

This is a vitally important campaign based on solid trade union principles of international solidarity and we urge you to join us in the struggle to free Abdullah Öcalan. We would be very pleased to discuss the matter further should you so wish but in the meantime, you can consult our website at [www.freedomforocalan.org](http://www.freedomforocalan.org) We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



**Bert Schouwenburg**  
International Officer, GMB  
[Bert.Schouwenburg@gmb.org.uk](mailto:Bert.Schouwenburg@gmb.org.uk)  
[www.gmb.org.uk](http://www.gmb.org.uk)



**Simon Dubbins**  
Director of International, UNITE  
[simon.dubbins@unitetheunion.org](mailto:simon.dubbins@unitetheunion.org)  
[www.unitetheunion.org](http://www.unitetheunion.org)

## **What Role Should Western Powers Have to Advance the Democratic Agenda for the Kurds and Change in Turkey?**

Michael Rubin

Thank you for the opportunity to present here today. The Kurds have organized and risen to the point where it is impossible for Western powers to ignore them. As Kurdish aspirations rise, many regional powers would like to see a 21<sup>st</sup> century equivalent of the Treaty of Lausanne, sacrificing Kurdish interests to those of other regional powers. The Kurds, however, are more organized and more powerful than they have ever been. It is unlikely that they can be betrayed without consequence.

Still, it is essential that the Kurds not wait for a hand-out from the United States, European Union, or other entity. Western assistance is no substitute for Kurdish leaders getting their own house in order. The simple fact is that Kurds remain divided. In Iraqi Kurdistan, family interests trump nationalism. The Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga remain as divided today as they were a decade ago. Masoud Barzani, the de facto regional president, speaks of an independence referendum only when grumbling about economic mismanagement and unpaid salaries gets too great.

Turkey's Kurdish organizations and organizations face a crisis given the information and military campaigns waged against them. Many Turkish Kurdish leaders assume that they stand on the side of justice and popular aspirations, but they have done little to bring that message to the non-Kurdish audience in the West.

Too many politically-active Kurds write for Kurdish websites or portals and debate with fellow Kurds in coffee shops and restaurants catering to a Kurdish clientele. They must write for the Washington Post, New York Times, Le Monde, and Der Spiegel, rather than for Kurdish outlets of which few congressmen, parliamentarians, or ministers have heard. Unfortunately, Kurdish leaders make little effort to reach out to the broader policymaking community whose decision-making may not be based upon a Kurdish consensus about social justice and morality. If Kurds want Western countries to offer support, they must first inform non-Kurdish audiences. If Kurds march under flags bearing the hammer-and-sickle, symbol of an ideology that contributed to the deaths of tens of millions of people during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they risk losing sympathy from mainstream officials in the West. Ditto any embrace of Che Guevara, a man responsible for the murder of hundreds of innocents. Simply put, Kurdish movements must decide whether they want to cultivate only the left, or the right as well. Unless they win the support of both, Kurds will likely fail to achieve broad Western support for their political aims and national aspirations.

Outreach is important. The world knows about crimes against humanity in Darfur, Rohingya, and Aleppo, but they know little about similar actions perpetrated by the Turkish army and

intelligence services against Kurdish civilians in southeast Anatolia. Journalists and policymakers debate atrocities in Aleppo, but they know little about similar destruction in Cizre. Kurds must document Turkey's destruction of Kurdish towns and cities despite the obstacles placed in their path.

And, in the United States, they must lobby. The Kurdistan Regional Government office in Washington, DC, does not lobby for Kurds broadly or even for Iraqi Kurds specifically; its representative is unapologetically partisan and speaks only on behalf of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. While the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) has a talented and capable representative in Washington, one man is not enough to sway a Congress conditioned by apathy or decades of a narrative shaped by the Turkish government, nor does a party representation equate to a lobby. Lobbying is expensive and requires a non-Kurd to make the case that a new U.S. approach is required. Congressmen listen to former congressmen and diplomats listen to former diplomats. Leveraging the business community is also important, although this will be difficult given many Kurdish parties' hostility to free market capitalism and foreign direct investment.

Western states are naturally inclined toward the status quo, even more now since so many have concluded (perhaps wrongly) from the Iraq war and Arab Spring that strongman dictators better contribute to security and stability than democratization and popular sovereignty. This attitude will be hard to overcome. Kurdish officials often pitch their political goals as win-win, no-cost solutions. They point to the federalism that exists in countries like Canada, Spain, Switzerland, and Belgium as the model for Kurdistan, or those who seek independence cite Czechoslovakia's divorce into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Western diplomats and security officials, however, are natural pessimists: They focus on what might go wrong. What happens if only one side wants federalism, but the other is willing to fight to prevent it? And, for every Czech Republic and Slovakia, isn't there an East Timor, South Sudan, Kosovo, and Eritrea? That is not to say Kurdistan would descend into civil war or become a failed state, but it behoves the Kurdish officials to convince Western governments about why such fears are unfounded.

Of course, overshadowing our discussions today is the failure of the peace process in Turkey and the descent of Turkey into civil war. Turkey has traditionally been an important NATO ally and has a decades-long security relationship with the United States and almost every country in Western Europe. Even if Turkey's values are at odd with Europe and with NATO, it is important to remember two characteristics of NATO: It is governed by consensus and there is no mechanism to force a member to leave the alliance against its will. This may not win Turkey friends, but it does give Turkey leverage in its negotiations with Western powers vis-à-vis the Kurds.

How can Kurds overcome the natural inclination of Western states to work with Turkey and ignore the Kurds? First, the Kurds must convince the West that a return to the status quo ante is impossible. Thanks to Erdogan's cynical abuse of the peace process, his arrest of Kurdish politicians, and the horrific violence he has inflicted on ordinary Kurds, most Kurds in

southeastern Turkey do not identify themselves as citizens of Turkey and they never will again. Western officials may intervene diplomatically when they realize that there is no other option but to recognize a different political order.

Kurds may also seize the opportunity presented by Erdogan's increasingly unhinged descent into conspiracy. Erdogan's manipulation of intelligence is clear. Turkey's intelligence service's support and supply for Jebhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Syria raise questions about its trustworthiness. The Turkish dossiers provided to the U.S. Justice Department in support of Turkey's demand to extradite Fethullah Gülen not only raise questions about the quality of evidence in that case, but also about the quality of intelligence provided by Turkey in all previous cases. Much of the U.S. position toward senior Kurdish leaders—including those residents here in Brussels—is based on intelligence provided by Turkey. Take those accused of complicity in drug smuggling: Can the United States realistically take Turkey at its word given the Turkish penchant for fabricating such material? The same holds true with regard to the Kurdistan Workers Party. Kurds have a case that Turkish intelligence contribution dating back to the Cold War should be re-assessed and if the intelligence upon which U.S. officials based designations is not defensible, those designations should be reversed.

Kurds have an opportunity to achieve real change, but they cannot achieve it on their own. If they will be successful, however, rather than simply demand Western sympathy and solidarity, they must make a pragmatic rather than moral case about why decades of Western policy should be reversed.

Thank you.



**Michael Rubin** is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC and senior lecturer at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. Between 2002 and 2004, Rubin worked as a staff advisor for Iran and Iraq in the Office of the Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon. Between 2004 and 2009, he was chief editor of the *Middle East Quarterly*. He received his Ph.D. in history from Yale University in 1999.

Rubin currently teaches seminars about terrorism for the FBI, and teaches for the U.S. Navy and Marines about Turkey and the Middle East. Rubin is the author of *Kurdistan Rising* (AEI, 2016), *Dancing with the Devil: The Perils of Engagement* (Encounter, 2015), a history of American diplomacy with rogue regimes and terrorist groups, and *The Shi'ites of the Middle East* (AEI, 2014) as well as two earlier books examining Iranian history. Follow Rubin on twitter: @mrubin1971.

# **The Path to Peace and Democracy**

Hatip Dicle

Dear Participants,

I greet you all on behalf of the Democratic Society Congress.

I would like to begin by introducing our congress and describing its functions.

Our congress is a civil society assembly made up of organisations such as parties, trade unions, foundations and associations and elected representatives of the people in Kurdistan of Turkey. Apart from the Kurds, representatives of various ethnic and faith groups that live in Kurdistan are represented in our congress. Its aim is to develop democracy in Kurdistan, to institutionalise it and make a contribution to a peaceful, democratic solution to the Kurdish question. Of a total of 501 delegates, 60 per cent are popularly elected, while 40 per cent are representatives of civil society organisations and independent persons. Just like parliaments, it has a working system based on commissions. Today it is facing severe repression and obstruction from the authorities.

As you know, the nation state of the Republic of Turkey was established on part of Ottoman territory following the Sykes-Picot agreement. The founding paradigm of this state entailed different ethnicities, first and foremost the Kurdish people, being subjected to denial of their identity, forced assimilation and a process of eradication in the mangle of a policy of Turkification. The same policy was also implemented against Alevi, Yezidi and Christian communities. The Kurdish people rose in revolt against this tyranny in various parts of Kurdistan between 1924 and 1938. These uprisings were brutally suppressed, but this did not alter the reality that the Kurdish question remained at the top of the political agenda in Turkey. Hence, in 1984 the armed struggle under the leadership of the PKK began under these objective conditions. Former Turkish President Süleyman Demirel called this latest uprising the 29th Kurdish revolt, which is an expression of the depth of this question.

Despite this reality, the Turkish state has still not abandoned its 93-year-old policy regarding the Kurdish question, which is based on denial and violence. It has been unable to change its mentality and search for a democratic solution. It has been unable to evolve from an oligarchic republic into a democratic one.

I plainly stress this truth: the Kurds believe that their problems can be resolved within the borders of the Republic of Turkey, in the framework of political dialogue and through democratic methods. They wish for their national identity to be recognised in the constitution and to benefit from the language, culture, political and other rights safeguarded by international conventions. They also desire a political status that would enable them to attain

self-government, as has been realised in many democratic countries and are waging a struggle for these goals.

In this context, we have for years proposed that an administrative-political system similar to the one that exists in Spain, with 20 to 25 autonomous regions, each with its own local parliament and government, with devolved powers, apart from foreign affairs, national defence, fiscal matters and the judicial system, be introduced in Turkey. In this system of devolved government all ethnic and faith groups would be able to organise themselves freely. In brief, the Kurds have always been in favour of a peaceful solution to the problem, but the state has not demonstrated the necessary political will to achieve a resolution.

I am one of the living witnesses to the efforts that have been made by the Kurdish side to find a peaceful solution, having been involved in talks with delegations from the government since 1993 until the most recent talks in 2013-2015.

In 1993 I was a Diyarbakır MP in the Turkish Parliament for the DEP, which was closed down. Following appeals from high-ranking state officials and political parties, including the DEP, PKK leader Mr Ocalan declared a one-month unilateral ceasefire on 17 March 1993. This step created great hopes and expectations for a peaceful solution on the Kurdish side and in democratic circles. The Turkish President at the time, Turgut Özal, sent a group of DEP MPs, including myself, and Mr Jalal Talabani, the leader of the PUK, who later became President of Iraq, to Lebanon to meet Mr Ocalan to suggest he make the ceasefire indefinite. The talks went well and at a press conference which we attended on 16 April 1993, Mr Ocalan declared that the ceasefire would last indefinitely.

However, on April 17, before we had left Damascus to return to Turkey, we received the news that President Özal had died. The timing of his death seemed suspicious. Subsequently, political circles and the Özal family claimed that the President had been murdered by a clique within the state that opposed a political resolution to the Kurdish question. The truth of this has never been confirmed, but following his death Turkey was once again dragged into a maelstrom of bloodshed and violence. We Kurdish MPs who were part of the delegation received long prison sentences.

PKK leader Mr Ocalan declared two more unilateral ceasefires in 1995 and 1998, however, just as in 1993, the state ignored these efforts. After Mr Ocalan was captured and handed over to Turkey on 15 February 1999, in an international conspiracy, the guerrillas withdrew to South Kurdistan (Northern Iraq) for 5 years. Despite the fact that not one single bullet being fired during that time, the state did not take advantage of the historic opportunity.

While during this period the EU and the US should have been encouraging Turkey to seek a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question, unfortunately at the beginning of 2003 the PKK was included, first by the US and then by the EU, on their “lists of terrorist organisations”. This encouraged Turkey to return once again to its belligerent policy vis-à-vis the Kurdish

question. The Kurds saw this unfortunate decision as a historic injustice that did not serve a peaceful and political solution to the problem.

In our opinion the correct position for the EU to take is that of a recent decision of a Brussels court, that the conflict in Turkey with Kurdish guerrillas is a “war”, that according to the Geneva Convention the PKK should be accepted as a “party to conflict”, and thus to remove the PKK from its “list of terrorist organisations”. I believe that such a realistic approach would make a great contribution to a peaceful and political solution and would be an important step on the path of democracy and peace.

After Mr Ocalan, who has been in prison on İmralı island for nearly 18 years and accepted as the de facto “main negotiator” by the state, made a proposal that was agreed by the AKP government, talks were carried on from the beginning of 2013 until 5 April 2015. I was a member of the İmralı delegation as the co-chair of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) for the last 7 months of this period. During this time, I went to Qendil in South Kurdistan on many occasions in order to inform PKK administrators of the talks going on at the round table on İmralı island. Written records of these talks were shared both with the state delegation and with Mr Ocalan.

As a result of all these efforts a road map consisting of 10 articles was drawn up, called the “Dolmabahçe Accord”, which in our opinion is a historic document. The aim of this road map was to achieve a breakthrough for a democratic republic in Turkey. In accordance with this, representatives of interested parties were to attend talks that would last for several months, reaching agreement on each article, and after the necessary legal and constitutional steps had been agreed it was to be signed by all parties. For instance, representatives of the Alevi community were to put forward their own demands and after agreement had been reached were to add their signatures. Similar talks were to have been held with the Kurds, minorities, women, workers etc. A “Monitoring Council” consisting of 7 or 8 persons agreed by the parties was to have witnessed the proceedings and to have helped resolve difficulties. All these discussions at İmralı were to have been published in the media and agreement reached countrywide. Of course, all these documents were to have given direction to the new democratic constitution that was to have been drafted in Turkey. Ultimately, Turkey was to have become a democratic republic.

At the conclusion of these negotiations Mr Ocalan was to have made an appeal to the PKK to hold a congress that would reach a decision to end the armed struggle that has been continuing since 1984. PKK administrators had even begun preparations for this. However, the expected did not happen, as President Erdoğan knocked over the negotiating table at İmralı on 5 April 2015, ending the process. He, along with ISIS, declared a war on the Kurdish people all over the Middle East. Towns and cities in Kurdistan were destroyed by tanks and artillery, the HDP Co-chairs, several Kurdish MPs and elected mayors were arrested and municipalities run by the DBP were handed over to government appointed trustees. Turkey has been transformed into a prison, with journalists, intellectuals and

politicians arrested and tens of thousands of public servants sacked. All these fascistic measures are part and parcel of this war.

It is obviously clear that Erdoğan is taking steps to institutionalise a dark dictatorship in Turkey, under the guise of an executive presidential system. He wants to liquidate the last glimmer of democracy and eliminate hopes of peace. Just like Hitler he is bellowing for war both in the country and abroad. If I have to spell it out, I can say: if Erdoğan cannot be stopped, he wants to put an end to peace, not only in Turkey, but also in the Middle East and the whole world.

Before concluding my words, I wish to say the following to all those mediating, peace-loving friends who are trying to contribute to a just, lasting and honourable peace for the Kurdish question: in the same way that it is important during negotiations for the guns to fall silent and for ideas to be heard, of equal importance is safeguarding the health and security of Mr Ocalan, and ensuring his complete freedom in the shortest time possible. These steps should be taken decisively in order that the path to peace and democracy be transformed from a dream into reality.

Finally, I would like to say that we in Turkey and in Kurdistan who are in favour of peace and the fraternity of peoples, and everyone who supports democracy, we will be together and resist and will most certainly win. Our hopes are steadfast and we are resolute and determined.



**Hatip Dicle** was born in 1955 in Amed (Diyarbakir). He graduated from Istanbul technical & civil engineering University. He worked for State Highway Agency for next 8 year. He was chairman of Diyarbakir Human Right Association in 1990. He was elected MP for Amed metropolis in 1991 election in alliance with SHP-HEP. He was Deputy chair of HEP, (People Labour Party). After HEP was banned by Turkish Security Court, he was elected as the leader of the newly formed DEP.

Hatip was arrested together with a group of MP colleagues on 2nd of March 1994, when Turkish Parliament voted to lift parliamentary immunity of DEP MPs.

Hatip was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment by DGM (State Security Court). He served 10 years in Prison. After he was released he worked as DTK Co-ordinating member but could not take official rolls as he was banned by legal derestriction. In 2009, he was elected Co- Chair of TDK (Congress of Democratic Society) only to be arrested a week later. He was kept in prison for 5 years with no conviction. Hatip was overwhelmingly elected as an MP for Amed in 2011, but the Turkish state de-validated his election. After his release from prison in 2014, he was re-elected as the co-chair of TDK, a position he currently holds. He is also member of Imralı delegation.

## **Agenda for Change: Kurdish Prospects and Alternatives**

Zubeyir Aydar

Dear friends,  
Dear participants,

The initiative taken by the EUTCC—since accession talks began for Turkey’s membership to the EU—in organising the annual “EU, Turkey, Middle East and Kurds” conference series is an important and commendable endeavour, which aims to monitor Turkey-EU relations with a civil approach. The 13th conference this year coincides with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sykes-Picot agreement and a historical analysis of the current chaos in the Middle East will undoubtedly contribute to the discussions for the region’s problems. I would like to thank the EUTCC, the EP Socialist Democrat Group, the EP Left Group and everyone else who has contributed to this worthy event and wish them all success.

Dear participants,

In this presentation, I will try to address some matters in accordance with the conference’s main theme and this discussion’s heading and will talk on how the Kurdish side views Turkey-EU relations, the war in Turkey and the Middle East and change and democracy.

But before I start I would like to share with you some information we have only just obtained: We have reliable information that AKP-MHP circles are discussing the elimination of Kurdish People’s Leader Abdullah Ocalan. In fact, those discussing this are asking different parties what the results of this action could be. Commentators have also said that the reintroduction of capital punishment being brought onto the agenda to shape public opinion is also within this framework. We do not know how true these claims are. However, we are receiving information that this is being done to prepare the groundwork for Mr. Ocalan’s elimination. For this reason, we are calling for sensitivity to this issue from primarily the Kurdish people, the EU, relevant international organisations and public opinion to prevent this dangerous situation.

When we look back a 100 year we can see that there was a World War in the Middle East then too. The Sykes-Picot, Sevres and Lausanne agreements shaped the region. Unjust and unfounded borders were drawn up and divided countries, peoples, tribes and families to create the 100-year issues of today. Now 100 years later we have another World War in the region. The USA, European countries, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Arab countries, Israel, Kurds and many other states and powers are involved in this war. It is not clear how long this war will continue for and what the region will look like after the war.

I was a speaker at the 9th and 10th conferences here too. At that time, a negotiated resolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey based on dialogue was on the agenda. In my presentations, I spoke about how the negotiations should proceed and the Kurdish side’s requests. Today in

the country however there is a total war in relation to the Kurdish question and a rapid slide towards dictatorship. As you know the dialogue process lasted until the spring of 2015. The general elections took place on 7th June. Before the elections Tayyip Erdogan and the AKP government conducted surveys showing that the HDP was exceeding the 10% threshold and that the situation was not in their favour. With that they ended the dialogue and began preparing for war.

On 24 July 2015, the Turkish state began a wholesale war on the Kurdish Freedom Movement and Kurdish people. Since that day they have continued these attacks without heeding any laws and rights. Every inch of mountain and stone has been bombed, forests have been set on fire. These attacks were not limited to rural areas as cities were also targeted. Curfews lasting many months were declared in more than a dozen towns and cities. In some cities, these lasted for 8 months. Civilians of all ages were targeted, many being killed on streets or in their homes; tens of injured civilians were burned alive in basements. Tens of neighbourhoods in 7 cities, including Diyarbakir's historic Sur were destroyed, wiped off the map, with work machines. More than a million people were victimised in these attacks and destruction.

Turkey's attacks are not just limited to North Kurdistan (South-eastern Turkey). At the same time, South Kurdistan (Iraq) and Rojava (Syria) are also under attack. At the same time Turkey's aggression against Rojava serves Daesh (ISIS) and targets the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is waging the most effective struggle against Daesh. Turkey's operations in the north of Aleppo are also sabotaging the operation launched by the SDF in alliance with the U.S.-led coalition to liberate Raqqa from Daesh. Furthermore, it is no secret that Turkey has been directly supporting Salafist groups such as Daesh and the al-Nusra Front against Kurds for years.

Turkey's attacks are not just limited to the military sphere. Kurdish gains in the political sphere are also under attack; Kurdish parties, municipalities, associations and politicians have been targeted. The biggest assault has been on Kurdish organisations and politicians. Mayors who were elected with large majority votes (most above 50%, some above 90%) have been arrested or dismissed and replaced by state appointed trustees. The HDP's presence in parliament is also under threat. 10 HDP deputies including the party's co-chairs have been imprisoned, with the arrest of the remaining MPs also on the agenda. The party's executives and employees are also being targeted with more than 2000 jailed just in the past 3 months. Every Kurd who says 'I want to live freely with my own identity' is a target. An example of this is the purge of 11,000 Kurdish teachers by decree law in September. The attack is extensive and comprehensive; these are just some examples.

Turkey is not confining itself to this much though. It is after a similar incident to the assassination of 3 Kurdish women politicians in Paris on 9 January 2013. We have information from several sources that they have sent teams of assassins to Belgium and other European cities to murder Kurdish politicians, of whom I am one.

Dear participants,

Of course, this aggression is not just limited to Kurds; all dissidents are being attacked. Recep Tayyip Erdogan doesn't want any opposition in the country. Journalists and others who are not aligned to the government are all being targeted. Turkey is currently the biggest jailer of journalists in the world. Since the 15 July coup attempt and using it as a pretext the government has been administering the country with a state of emergency and decree laws. As you will be well aware there was a coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016. Despite more than 5 months since the incident the details of the coup are yet to be revealed. According to many circles (and I agree with this), Erdogan and the government were aware of the coup and directed it towards failure. The coup attempt and later developments prove this thesis right. On the day of the coup Erdogan called the coup attempt, "A gift from God." Erdogan is using this attempt to suppress his opponents and strengthen his one-man administration.

Allying with the racist MHP, other nationalists and religionists, Erdogan is developing an ultra-nationalist rhetoric both internally and externally. The aim of nationalists in this alliance is to suppress the Kurdish Freedom Movement and assimilate the Kurds by intimidating them. The conservative religious circles Erdogan represents are also nationalists and not much different from the other nationalists. Erdogan's personal goal is to pass the "Turkish type presidency" as he calls it, in parliament. What he calls a "Turkish type presidency" is in fact a caliphate, a sultanate and a dictatorship. Turkey is currently hurtling down this path.

Dear participants,

Recently, relations between Turkey and the European Union have been strained. Most recently, the European Parliament voted in favour of freezing the accession process with Turkey. The straining of relations is mainly due to the above outlined reasons. Accession talks with Turkey have been continuing for exactly 12 years. If Turkey had met the conditions, the talks would have been over by now. A jest was made to Turkey 12 years ago. Normally neither then or at any other time had Turkey ever followed the Copenhagen Criteria. In the last few years, Turkey has negatively diverted away from this route.

The aftermath of the 7 June 2015 elections, where Erdogan did not recognise the election results, has been an atmosphere of a constant coup. Especially after 15 July 2016, Turkey has been administered by a counter-coup. Right now, no one can say that Turkey is being governed in accordance with the Copenhagen Criteria. The government in Turkey, and especially Erdogan, are not interested in EU membership anymore. As long as this government is in power, no one should expect any progress in Turkey – EU relations. At first, Erdogan was very pro-EU due to his attempt at consolidating power by weakening the army. I would argue that even if the EU says "we will take you in without any preconditions, we will only ask you to fulfil conditions that member states fulfil", Erdogan would reject this offer. His mind is set on becoming a Sultan; and the Sultanate he is after does not concur with EU criterion.

Referring to the refugees in a speech he made after the European Parliament's decision Erdogan said, "if you go any further, you'd better know that these borders will be opened". This is an explicit threat, clear blackmail. Now think about this, hundreds of thousands of refugees trying to cross the Aegean, thousands drowning and thousands of others being washed ashore just like Alan Kurdi. Now I ask; who else but Erdogan will be responsible for this? How can one stand by and watch games like these being played with the lives of thousands of innocent people?

Therefore, the European Parliament's decision to freeze accession talks is on point. However, it has been late in coming. The EU has always tolerated and maintained a balance with the Erdogan administration. We believe that this approach has encouraged Erdogan to continue with his threats. There have always been similar approaches in history, especially in European history; however, these types of personalities cannot be kept in check by being tolerated. If they do not see clear stances they will not take normal steps. It is for this reason that the European Union should adopt a clear stance in December 2016 just like the European Parliament.

Dear participants,

As the Kurdish side, we were sincere with our approach to a peaceful solution through dialogue and wanted to conclude the process with permanent peace. I say this here once again; we remain committed to the proposals and views we expressed in both the Oslo process and the Imrali process. The termination of dialogue was not our decision. The process was ended unilaterally by Turkey.

As it is well known, the head-negotiator of the Kurdish side is Mr Abdullah Ocalan, the meetings were held with him. The last meeting in Imrali Prison was on 5 April, 2015. Just as the dialogue were terminated, so was all meetings with Mr Abdullah Ocalan. Since that date, he has been held in intensified isolation. Mr Ocalan has worked hard for a peaceful solution for years. The condition he is being kept in only means more conflict. In the previous session, the representative from the trade unions in the UK, Mr Simon Dubbins, talked about the freedom for Ocalan campaign they are running. They are conducting an ethical and humanitarian campaign, I congratulate them. As I stated above, Mr Ocalan is under threat. I propose that this conference and the European Parliament support this campaign.

Dear participants,

We, as a people and a movement, are under attack. Turkey's attacks against us are not limited to within the borders of Turkey; they are also attacking on a daily basis in the south of Kurdistan and Rojava. And now they are saying that they will attack Qendil and Sinjar. In one of his speeches before the attacks, Erdogan said, "you will bow your heads, or you will give your heads". But we say that we will not bow our heads to this dictator. We will use the legitimate right of self-defence and defend ourselves and our people.

Even if they are not organised particularly well, there is an aggrieved mass in favour of democracy subjugated by the government. We will try to be by the side of all those in favour

of democracy. We will help bring together the existing forces of democracy, form a wide democracy front and be an active part of this front.

Another subject is the matter of all Kurdish organisations; they need to come together urgently to discuss what kind of unity and what kind of a congress they will form. If this materialises then the dangers will minimise. The opportunities for success are much larger than the dangers. We will make all efforts necessary for this to materialise.

Dear participants,

The Kurdish people are the most effective force fighting against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The Kurds are not just effective in their fight against Salafism, they are also the most secular community in the region. The Kurds also possess an alternative project in terms of democratic government, the joint life of all ethnicities and religious groups, and the liberation of women. Especially the democratic and participant government that they have established in Syria has turned out to be a model for the reconstruction of the whole of Syria. The Rojava model is also very educational in terms of women's participation in all levels of government and their participation in the self defence of society.

Dear participants,

The Kurdish question is not only a regional problem; it is an international problem that concerns Europe. We are here in the European Parliament undertaking this conference and outlining our proposals for a solution. Until now, the approach of the European Union and Western powers as a whole have not served a peaceful solution, instead they have actually supported forces that are hindering a peaceful solution. Anyone with a conscience knows that the Kurdish people's freedom struggle is legitimate and rightful. To label this struggle as terror or terrorism is illegitimate, heartless and effectively siding with the tyrant. The West has until now labelled the Kurdistan Freedom Movement as terrorist, and within this framework has not arrested Kurdish politicians but has also supported Turkey both diplomatically and militarily. This approach is clearly encouraging the warmongers and deepening the conflict. Without abolishing the terrorist organisations list and all implementations that derive from this list, it is not possible to serve the solution of the Kurdish question and reconstruct democracy in Turkey. The policies of Turkey are not only harmful for the Kurds; they are harmful to all opposition and democratic forces and the values of the EU. Our demand and expectancy is that the EU revises its policies and removes the Kurdistan Freedom Movement from its terrorist organisations list and plays a role in the peaceful solution of the Kurdish question.

Dear participants,

As it can be seen, the stability of the Middle East affects the whole world, not least Europe. Until that region is not stable, Europe will always be effected negatively. An important cause for this instability is the lack of a solution to the Kurdish question. For this reason, our call to Europe is that you help the Kurds to attain a just and rightful status in the region. As the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, we would like to declare that we are open to working with you and listening to your views and proposals.

As I draw to a close, I would like to once again draw your attention to the conditions of Mr Abdullah Ocalan who is under constant threat, and ask the conference to take a stand on the matter.

Within this framework, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sykes-Picot agreement, I salute you with the hope that this conference contributes to the democratisation of the Middle East and opens new horizons for the solution of the Kurdish question.



**Zubeyir Aydar** is a Kurdish politician, lawyer and Executive Member of Brussels-based Kurdistan National Congress (KNK). Aydar is a graduate from the Law School of Istanbul University and was one of the organizers of Human Rights Association (IHD) Siirt branch in late 1980s. In 1991, he joined the first pro-Kurdish People's Labor Party (HEP) and was elected to Turkish Parliament from Siirt.

Following the closure of HEP by Turkish government, Aydar along with other Kurdish lawmakers led the establishment of another pro-Kurdish (now defunct) Democracy Party (DEP). Aydar left Turkey in 1994 and settled in Brussels after his party DEP was banned from politics by Turkish government and immunities of Kurdish MPs were lifted. In Belgium, Aydar joined the Kurdistan Parliament in Exile which was later replaced by Kurdistan National Congress in 1999.

# International Justice and Crimes against Humanity

Bill Bowring

In this presentation, I address the question: is there (and has there been) an “internal armed conflict” in Turkey?

That is the precondition for the application of the International Law of Armed Conflict (ILAC) and the possible attribution to Turkey, as a state, of violations of international law, or to Turkish individuals of war crimes.

I answer the question in the affirmative. I show that a positive answer can have important consequences for domestic proceedings concerning terrorism, or for extradition requests. There are serious obstacles however to proceedings either against Turkey or individuals.

## **What are the criteria for determining whether there is an internal armed conflict?<sup>1</sup>**

Susan Breau has adopted the following definition by D. Schindler:

“Practice has set up the following criteria to delimit non-international armed conflicts from internal disturbances.

In the first place, the hostilities have to be conducted by force of arms and exhibit such intensity that, as a rule, the government is compelled to employ its armed forces against the insurgents instead of mere police forces.

Secondly, as to the insurgents, the hostilities are meant to be of a collective character, that is, they have to be carried out not only by single groups.

In addition, the insurgents have to exhibit a minimum amount of organisation. Their armed forces should be under a responsible command and be capable of meeting minimal humanitarian requirements.

Accordingly, the conflict must show certain similarities to a war, without fulfilling all conditions necessary for the recognition of belligerency.”<sup>2</sup>

I agree.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides another definition of a non-international armed conflict. Article 8 2(f) provides a definition that is not as stringent as Additional Protocol II but not as general as Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions which applies to all armed conflict.

Article 8 (2) (f) states:

Paragraph 2 (e) applies to armed conflicts not of an international character and thus does not apply to situations of internal disturbances and tensions, such as riots, isolated and sporadic acts of violence or other acts of a similar nature. It applies to

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Susan C. Breau “The situation in south-east Turkey: Is it an armed conflict for the purpose of international humanitarian law?” at [http://campacc.org.uk/uploads/seminar\\_breau2.pdf](http://campacc.org.uk/uploads/seminar_breau2.pdf) (accessed on 5 December 2016)

<sup>2</sup> D. Schindler, ‘The Different Types of Armed Conflicts According to the Geneva Conventions and Protocols’, *Recueil des cours*, Volume 163/ii, 1979, p. 147.

armed conflicts that take place in the territory of a State when there is protracted armed conflict between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups.

Susan Breau (correctly in my view) concludes:

- 1) there has been sustained violence between the military and security forces of Turkey and an organised group, the PKK since 1984.
- 2) the violence takes place within a sovereign State Turkey.
- 3) the PKK has the level of organisation required and has a military command structure.
- 4) the PKK has expressed its agreement to abide by the laws of armed conflict. This was confirmed by a statement to the United Nations delivered in Geneva on 24 January 1995 which states:

In its conflict with the Turkish state forces, the PKK undertakes to respect the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the First Protocol of 1977 regarding the conduct of hostilities and the protection of the victims of war and to treat those obligations as having the force of law within its own forces and the areas within its control.<sup>3</sup>

- 5) the violence may be reaching the intensity of armed conflict. Only cautious analysis of each incident and a comprehensive review of the structure of the PKK will give a definitive answer

### **Relevance for domestic proceedings**

#### *The Russian Constitutional Court*

On 31 July 1995, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation determined that at the international level the provisions of Protocol II of the 1977 Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions were binding on both parties to the armed conflict and that the actions of the Russian armed forces in the conduct of the Chechen conflict violated Russia's international obligations under Additional Protocol II to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Nonetheless, the Court sought to excuse this non-compliance because Protocol II had not been incorporated into the Russian legal system.<sup>4</sup>

The Court clearly labelled the armed conflict in Chechnya as a civil war fulfilling the conditions required by Article I of Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, namely as a prolonged internal armed conflict having great intensity. The Court could have categorised the conflict under three other headings: (i) as a civil war of short duration and with a low threshold of intensity regulated by common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions; (ii) as an instance of internal disturbance and tension to which no humanitarian international rule would apply; or (iii) as a war of national liberation, covered by Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.

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<sup>3</sup> PKK Statement to the United Nations Geneva, 24 January, 1995

<sup>4</sup> Paola Gaeta "The Armed Conflict in Chechnya before the Russian Constitutional Court" 7 *European Journal of International Law* (1996) 563-570

The Court clearly spelled out that the provisions of Protocol II are binding upon both parties to the armed conflict, i.e. that the Protocol confers rights and imposes duties also on insurgents. The Court directed that Russia should legislate to incorporate the requirements of Protocol II. This has not happened, nor has any individual been prosecuted.

#### *The English extradition court*

I was an expert witness in 2003 in the case of *Russian Federation v Zakaev* at the Bow Street Magistrates Court. On 13 November 2003 Judge Timothy Workman, the Senior District Judge, gave his judgment. Mr Zakaev's extradition was sought by Russia on charges including several counts of murder.

Judge Workman said:

“It has been submitted to me that the conduct, which would amount to an offence of murder in this country, should not be regarded as an extradition crime because the offence of murder can only take place during the currency of the Queen's peace, and that there is no peace during the existence of war. The killing of combatants in war would not amount to the crime of murder.

The Government maintains that the fighting which was taking place in Chechnya amounted to a riot and rebellion, “banditry” and terrorism. The Defence submit that it is clear beyond peradventure that this was at the very least an internal armed conflict and could probably be described as a war. In many cases, it would be difficult to decide the point at which civil riot becomes internal armed conflict. Mr Lewis drew the analogy of Northern Ireland and suggested that the difference was purely a matter of degree. Although the line has to be drawn at some point, I am quite satisfied that the events in Chechnya in 1995 and 1996 amounted in law to an internal armed conflict. Indeed, many observers would have regarded it as a civil war. In support of that decision I have taken into account the scale of the fighting – the intense carpet bombing of Grozny with in excess of 100,000 casualties, the recognition of the conflict in terms of a cease fire and a peace treaty. I was unable to accept the view expressed by one witness that the actions of the Russian Government in bombing Grozny were counter-terrorist operations.

Having satisfied myself that this was an internal armed conflict which would fall within the Geneva Conventions, I reach the conclusion that those crimes which allege conspiring to seize specific areas of Chechnya by the use of armed force or resistance are not extraditable crimes because the conduct in those circumstances would not amount to a crime in this country.”

#### *The Belgian terrorism judgment*

On 3 November 2016, the Brussels first instance criminal court ruled that the criminal charges against persons alleged to have carried out activities with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) cannot be classified as terrorism as they fall within an armed conflict. The decision was given as part of a trial of Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) members in

which 36 people were accused of recruiting minors in Belgium and other western countries to take them to PKK training camps in Iraq and Greece in 2010.<sup>5</sup>

The judgment contained the following:

“Article 141 bis of the Belgian Criminal Code states that if there is an armed conflict, the terrorism law cannot be applied. The fact whether there is an armed conflict somewhere should be judged on basis of facts. It is not sufficient to say that the PKK is on the list of terrorist organizations because those lists are inspired by geopolitical reasons and we have to face the fact that there are countries who do not agree with the fact that some organizations are on the list. So, to decide whether there is an armed conflict, we have to check the intensity of the conflict and how well organized the actors of the conflict are. The main condition whether a conflict is existing is based on the Geneva conventions their protocols and the statute of Rome. The statute of Rome speaks about long going armed conflicts between authorities and organized armed groups.

During the discussion in front of the court the history of the PKK was given by the defence lawyers, the way of working of the PKK, the political arm of the PKK and the army. The lawyers of the persons who are prosecuted spoke also about the PKK since the seventies and about the armed struggle since 1984. The defence lawyers also spoke about a lot of other incidents, the fact that heavy weapons are used and the fact that there is a structure of command who make it possible that military operations are carried out. The defence also refers to important sources as there are the Red Cross etc. those sources speak about armed conflict.”

This decision is subject to appeal.

### **Turkey and international law**

Turkey ratified the 1949 Geneva Conventions on 10 February 1954. It has not ratified the 1977 Additional Protocols.

Turkey has neither signed nor ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

However:

- In October 2004, following changes to the constitution, the then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan told the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that Turkey had completed all domestic legal preparations and would ratify the Rome Statute in the near future.
- In December 2008, as part of the process of joining the European Union (EU), the government approved its third national program for adopting EU law, which included a reference to completing the work necessary for Turkey to join the ICC.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.turkishminute.com/2016/11/04/belgian-court-rules-pkk-activities-armed-conflict-not-terrorism/>;  
<http://rudaw.net/english/world/03112016>;

- In May 2010 at the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review, Turkey accepted several recommendations that it join the ICC<sup>6</sup>

### *International proceedings*

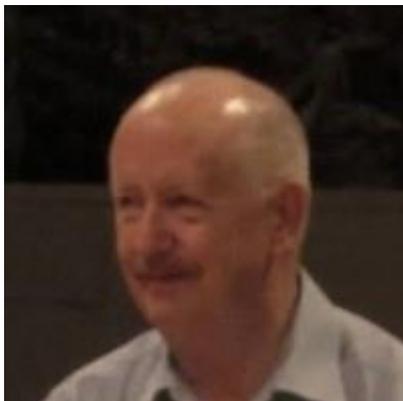
The UN's International Court of Justice can only hear claims by one state against another, or requests for an advisory opinion made by an organ of the UN.

The subject matter of such a claim could be violations by Turkey of its obligations under international treaties including the Geneva Convention, or of customary international law, which would – very likely – include war crimes and crimes against humanity.

But there is presently no state willing to take proceedings against Turkey, nor are there serious moves to secure a majority in the General Assembly.

The Council of Europe's European Court of Human Rights does not deal with war crimes or crimes against humanity, although many cases have been taken against Turkey for violations of human rights

The International Criminal Court does not have jurisdiction concerning Turkey.



**Bill Bowring** is a professor of human rights and international law at Birkbeck College, University of London. His first degree was in Philosophy, from the University of Kent. He has been at Birkbeck since 2006. He previously taught at University of East London, Essex University and London Metropolitan University. As a practising barrister since 1974, he has represented applicants before the European Court of Human Rights in many cases since 1992, especially against Turkey on behalf of Kurds, and Russia on behalf of Chechens. Bill has over 100 publications on topics

of international law, human rights, minority rights, Russian law and philosophy.

Bill's latest book is *Law, Rights and Ideology in Russia: Landmarks in the Destiny of a Great Power* (Routledge 2013). He is International Secretary, and previously Chair, of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers; and a founder in 1993 and President of the European Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH), with members in 18 European countries. The ELDH member associations in Turkey are ÇHD, Çağdaş Hukukçular Derneği, and Lawyers Association of Freedom, ÖHD.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/news/20140904/turkey-can-bolster-its-role-world-joining-icc> (accessed on 5 December 2016)

## **Self-Governance, De-Centralisation and Co-Existence**

Metin Rhawi

Honourable members of the floor, ladies and gentlemen and friends,

First of all, I would like to thank you all for the concern you are showing by attending here today, sharing our thoughts regarding the current process is very important. Many thanks to the different political components within the European Parliament for co-organize this conference.

For us as Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian, CSA people it is always important to participate in conferences in order to make ourselves heard, for us vulnerable people such as CSA, Yezidis, Kurds it is extremely important to get the chance for dialogue with people like you who want to understand us correctly. As you know the oppressions, the persecutions that started more than 100 years ago are still going on.

In the past, we all know what happened, genocides, division within ethnicities, new borders parting families into citizens of different countries made the minorities even more vulnerable. The Middle East became a big grave or tomb for diversity and pluralism both ethnical and religious. We all know more or less about the Genocide of 1915, when the Armenians, Pontiac Greeks and CSA became the target and were killed in millions, also other minorities suffered and killed.

The agreement of Sykes-Picot in 1916 draw new borders that made one geography into many new countries, it did not only divide the Ottoman Empire but also the people that lived there. All the different ethnic groups end up in small parts in the new countries that now had established. Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon became pots of ethnic and religious diversity without a strategy for the future and how to establish common values.

The first thing the empowered people did was to find new way to dominate others who were different. We can mention the Turkism and Arabism that saw its own future and power in cleansing other ethnic or religious groups. Of course, all this happened in front of open curtain. I think that we all agree on that the CSA, Yezidis and Kurds are the indigenous people of this geographical area; there bills of rights and other issues should be solved in these countries and not somewhere else. As I see it the problem was the lack of democracy in the above-mentioned countries, if the agreement had set up not only new borders but also common values and democracy for all citizens we would most likely not faced the same problems that we face today, obviously, we could face other problems.

Dear friends, humankind can and must never surrender to dark and retrograde forces and must always seek new ways to solve exiting problems. In the bottom line, all religions, all ethnic groups and all political ideologies must coexist and respect each other. This world is

neither for one religion, one ethnic group, and one ideology nor for the self-interest of one single company or person's economy.

The problems that the Middle East faces today are threatening not only the Middle East countries but all countries of our world. I would like to emphasize on the situation of the CSA in the Middle East. We are today spread out due to many reasons, persecutions, genocides, forced to diasporas; we have no equal rights like other citizens in our countries. We have become the people that complain we have been traumatized and our ability to struggle or fight has been taken from us. For hundreds of years we have been forced to lower our voice, our head and the last bit of self-confidence has been taken from us. Of course, we will no longer accept this situation, we will no longer be afraid to make our voice heard. We will demand and fight for our right.

One single solution is not working all over the line, for us the CSA people that lives in all countries or former Ottoman Empire is divided in. Never the less we think that confederative administration system is most likely to work best for all Middle East. To empower all components ethnic or religious living in the area is vital, all groups must accept each other, and it cannot be acceptable that in some countries one cannot become president or leader of the country due to the individuals' religion, modern country should live according to laws made up more than thousands of years ago.

## **1. Iraq**

We are in favour of the Federal Administrative System, but in reality, the system has until now only has realized for Kurds and the Arabs, (both having same religion). Middle East is cradle of the 3 big religions, but only 1 is practically accepted.

The question is why does not the CSA, the Yezidis, the Turkmens, the Shabaks, the Armenians, the Kakis and the Mandeans have their own self-determination?

The answer is as simple as it can get, the dominant group, the majority empowers themselves and dominates the minority. Our alternative is very clear and has been presented to the European Parliament and US congress, we are glad that the EP has adopted one resolution in 27th of October 2016 on our solution. The Nineveh Plain along with Sinjar and Tel Afar with closes area, to become autonomous region for the CSA, Yezidis and the Turkmens. In this regard, we started 2 years ago a process of united strategy, which had been presented in a Common Declaration, signed in the European Parliament.

Basically, we support the federal structure system and propose the KRG model for our peoples as well.

## **2. Syria**

We regard the solution for Syria is Federal Administrative System. This war would probably not have taken place if the different ethnic and religious components in Syria would

feel equality in all the spectra of democracy. The solution is not change of regime or a president for another. We should not support the oppressed to become oppressor. Syria can become good soil for democracy to grow and develop in the hole region.

Today we can see that the CSA are representing themselves in politics, social building associations, and military forces. When ethnic groups, religious groups come together and creates self-confidence has historically showed to create new possibilities for development.

The Democratic Self-Administration of the cantons Gozarto /Jazira, Afrin and Kobane is the best alternative in giving democracy to the people. The Democratic Self-Administration administration as part of Federal system can give all different component of Syria a legal possibility to be empowered and take part in decision that effects their daily life with raised head.

Turkey embargos must stop in order for us to support The Democratic Self-Administration of the cantons Gozarto /Jazira, Afrin and Kobane. Turkey and its affiliates embargos makes it more or less impossible for the Democratic Self-Administration to get strong against IS. It is also very important that the UN and EU aid goes directly to Syrian Democratic Council via the Self-Administration of the cantons of Gozarto/Jazira Afrin and Kobane whom are better organised in structure today. We must rebuild the region, the humans, buildings and infrastructures. This political body must be present on the negotiation table both national and international.

Unfortunately, the Coalition along with many EU countries regards the opposition as the legitimate negotiation partner but, we must not forget that SDF, which is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious force, is taking the fight on the ground, it is the SDF who gives martyrs in the war against IS. Kobane has become a symbol for the fight of the good forces against the dark forces that IS represent.

My people the CSA has proofed during the siege of Khabour that we can overcome the fear, that we have been breastfed with. Liberating Khabour gave us as CSA the self/confidence both men and women to carry weapon. Christian valley (Wadi Nasara) the CSA groups a substantial number to count with should be in consideration as a Self-Administration for the Syriac Christians of Syria.

**3.** Of course, we must mention major actor of the Middle East politics, Turkey, this country has since it established 1923, worked against any kind of minorities within its borders. Turkey has not only affected the different components in Turkey but also in its neighbouring countries, whether it is Iraq, Syria or Lebanon. One result of that is that the CSA people are a very small minority in all these countries.

In Turkey, we can only find around 30 000 – 50 000 CSA. Turkey has many problems today at least 36 according to President Erdogan, the reason we say it is Turkey having all this problem is that all this different minorities do not get their rights. Mr. Erdogan and AKP

regards the components that require to be involved in decision taking as a problem. We don't regard that there is not a Kurdish issue but many Turkish issues. Mr. Erdogan/AKP/Turkey must turn its face back to democracy. All democratic countries must be very clear with Turkey with us.

Dear friends, finally I would like to end my speech saying quality is equal important to quantity. The CSA is small group today and we know all the reason to that, do not forget that CSA has contributed strongly to modern standards of today.

We can many times see how big countries with big armies, being the one who gets most support from the big political players. World Wildlife Fund yearly points out endangered species and together we all do everything in our power try to protect them.

Do please not regard us a specie but as humans in need of political empowerment. CSA is living in danger in many Middle East countries, the power we have against us are many times using us as something to use in political negotiating with other big powers. European Syriac Union is going to continue our work coexistence and to be the voice of CSA people in the Middle East, whatever needs they have.

Thank you for listening!



**Metin Rhawi** was born 1969 in Midyat, Turkey. In 1975, he moved with his family to Switzerland, and one year later to Sweden. After receiving his bachelor degree in Sweden, he worked as hairdresser in his own salon for many years. He was one of the founders of Suroyo TV in 2005 together with some friends, worked voluntarily as program host for 4 years before participating for the elections for the municipality city council in Södertälje.

In 2014, he was candidate for European Parliament election for the Social Democrat Party in Sweden. From 2004 until present he has worked in different fields within ESU for the rights of the CSA people. From 2015 until now he had made 4 visits to Iraq, Kurdistan and Syria in order to establish a common agenda among the minorities on the ground.

## Equality of Religious and Ethnic Minorities

Johannes de Jong



Dear friends,

First of all, thanks for having me here to speak on this issue. It's the closing speech of an important two-day event that really touches one of the core questions for today's world. It is so obvious that we cannot have peace without peace in those countries where the Kurds are a significant component of the population and that we will not have peace without them and that they can be key peace makers. I have the view that if there would have been no Sykes- Picot and if Kurds and Syriac-Assyrians would have had indeed their promised respective countries we would have had a lot less trouble in our world today.

However, we are now at this point and the simple question is how we solve this crisis. The answer lies in this unique new entity that sprang forward as a surprise result of the Syrian civil war and is actually the only good thing that came out of the Syrian quagmire.

The answer is the Democratic Self-Administration, the federation of Northern Syria Rojava. Some people expect for some reason that it should be perfect, right now. I think that this demand of perfection is incredible short-sighted. It simply forgets the context and challenges of mentality that this project needed to overcome while at the same time fighting a war against the cruellest enemy possible with far too little material support and suffering under the embargo by Turkey and the KDP. Furthermore, those demanding perfection, right now simply forget the oppressive and violent history of most European nation-states.

In that light, it is extremely remarkable what common people were able to achieve amidst these challenges. By far the most important achievement is laying real foundations for a culture of freedom by:

1. Realising freedom for women
2. Realising freedom of religion
3. Realising cooperation between ethnicities
4. Realising basic democratic structures

Now these four points are the cornerstones for a culture of freedom. A culture of freedom means that people are empowered to be free, to be able to be themselves and to make their own choices as individuals and as group and be able to live together with others without fear for one another. The Rojava project has made great progress in achieving a culture of freedom and this progress is hugely important both in the war against ISIS and in winning the peace post-ISIS.

The key reason for this progress is that the oppressed are empowered and set free. Women are empowered, they can become part of the YPJ, they fight for their freedom. Most importantly, their minds are freed from the chains of dominance. I need to emphasise here that a key role is the Self-Administration and the SDF that not only allow this to happen but also encourage women to be free by active empowerment and legislation. I start here with the liberation of women as it demonstrates so clearly how their liberation ends step by step the culture of oppression and dominance.

We need to understand that the culture of dominance and oppression is the reason behind ISIS, jihadism and the suffering of peoples in the region. It is the reason behind the war in Syria and the subsequent refugee stream. This culture of dominance and oppression is also the key reason behind the integration challenges we face here in Europe when we look to communities from the Middle-East, North-Africa and Central-Asia.

This culture of dominance is the main reason for the suffering of all the suffering in Turkey of the Kurds, Syriacs, Armenians and all religious minorities.

So, ending this culture of oppression and dominance by liberating oppressed people by empowering them is key to seriously reduce the wars, terrorism, integration challenges and refugee streams.

Now it is clear how the liberation of women is automatically connected to equality of religious and ethnic minorities. They are connected by bringing a culture of freedom and ending oppression. In this way at the end of the day, all are liberated.

Each of the minorities plays a role in the Self-Administration. Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrians, Turkmen, Yazidi's, Armenians and others have seats in all political bodies, both political and executive and do influence decision-making. Also, most of them have their own military representation in the Syrian Democratic Forces. The European Parliament called for support of both the YPG and Syriac Military Council at 12 March 2015, both founding components of the SDF.

Religious freedom is real and present. People can choose their own religious conviction without any governing body harassing them. The clearest evidence is the new Church of Kobane and the fact that people of all religions and none play a role at all levels of politics and defence. These are crucial developments that bring freedom and in this way, each separately challenge and defeat the culture of dominance and thus enable democracy.

From the perspective of ending the culture of un freedom and dominance it is obvious that the empowerment of ethnic minorities need to become as important as the liberation of women and vice versa. Sometimes I have the feeling that the empowerment of women is still seen as a separate 'box' that is not in the same 'box' as the equality of religious and ethnic minorities. I may be wrong but I sometimes have this feeling.

My challenge would be to see the liberation of women and the empowerment of minorities from the same perspective of ending the culture of oppression. It's not just a power-sharing 'deal' between Kurds and other ethnicities. The empowerment of minorities is key to bring freedom to all. If all are equally empowered, no one is oppressed and all are free. Not just 'equality' but also 'equally empowered' in politics, military and all other ways. I know that this is already happening but my point is that we all need to see the importance of this development as way to freedom for all.

This development in vision would strengthen the existing cooperation between the peoples and make supporting the Self-Administration of Northern Syria Rojava even more obvious for more people in the EU and the US. If equal empowerment is communicated and implemented with the same enthusiasm and rigour as the liberation of women, it will have a positive effect on the image of the Self-Administration internationally. It will help to reduce the negative propaganda that states time and again that 'Kurds are oppressing Arabs, Turkmen, Syriacs', well everybody else if you believe the propaganda. The best answer against this negative propaganda is time and again to strive for equal empowerment of all.

Finally, the realised freedom of religion is empowerment in itself. The individual is empowered to make his or her own choice. As a Calvinist, I know how important freedom of religion is to achieve freedom for all. Every time I explain to western Christians that Rojava has real freedom of religion, they look to me in disbelief forgetting how long it took to have the same freedom here. And Rojava did it just in one go. My suggestion here is again that it would be helpful to communicate this more clearly in the external international communication. It would make my lobby easier as well.

I close with repeating and emphasising that it is close to a miracle what has been achieved already in such a short time in liberating so many. This campaign of the liberation of the mind is key for democratic confederalism to succeed.

Given the huge challenges that have been overcome so far I have no doubt that the people of Rojava will succeed in continued liberation of all.

## **The Final Resolution of the 13th Annual EUTCC Conference; Kurdish Recommendations and Demands**

### **Kurdish demand and the denial policy**

The Kurds believe that their problems can be resolved within the borders of Turkey through dialogue and democratic methods. They wish their national identity to be recognised in the constitution, and to benefit from cultural and political rights safeguarded by international conventions. They also desire a political status through which to attain self-government, as realised in many democratic countries. Failing to accommodate their demands, the Turkish state has not yet abandoned its 93-year-old policy of denial and violence, proving unable to change its mentality.

- *The conference calls upon Turkey to give up the denial and violence policy and to give the Kurds and all the other ethnical and religious groups a cognitional guarantee.*

### **European blacklist**

After the Kurdish Leader Mr Abdullah Ocalan was abducted and handed over to Turkey on 15 February 1999, guerrilla units withdrew to South Kurdistan (Northern Iraq) where they remained for 5 years. Even though they did not fire a single bullet, the Turkish state failed to take advantage of this historic opportunity. While the EU and the US should have been encouraging Turkey to seek a peaceful solution, yet they, at the beginning of 2002, blacklisted the PKK. This encouraged Turkey to return once again to its belligerent approach vis-à-vis the Kurdish question. The Kurds saw this unfortunate decision as a historic injustice that did not help find a peaceful and political solution to their problem.

The Brussels Court's (41<sup>st</sup> Kamer [Correctional Raadkamer] on 3 November 2016) recent verdict to the effect that the war in Turkey "... is an armed conflict in the sense of the international humanitarian law" according to the Geneva conventions and Rome Statute.

*Therefore:*

- *The PKK should be accepted as a party to the conflict. This reflects the reality about the PKK and*
- *The PKK should be removed from the "list of terrorist organisations". This would make a great contribution to peace, opening the way for a political settlement.*

### **Peace process**

Mr Abdullah Ocalan, who has been jailed for nearly 18 years but accepted by the state as the "main negotiator", made a proposal that was agreed by the AKP government. Talks were

carried on from 2013 until 5 April 2015, resulting in a road map consisting of 10 articles. Its aim was a breakthrough for a democratic republic in Turkey. Even though PKK administrators began preparing for this, on 5 April 2015 Erdogan derailed the process. Therefore, the EUTCC conference:

- *Calls for the support of the “Freedom for Ocalan Campaign” launched by the major British trade unions the GMB and UNITE in April 2016, who called for the release of Mr Ocalan as an essential element for a peace process to be successful.*
- *Calls for restarting the peace process, giving Mr Ocalan be freedom and to have all the freedom to create his negotiations’ team and free contact to his movement.*

### **Mr Ocalan under constant threat**

Our conference received the information that AKP-MHP circles are discussing the elimination of Mr Abdullah Ocalan. In fact, those discussing this are asking different parties what the results of this action could be. Commentators have also said that the reintroduction of capital punishment being brought onto the agenda to shape public opinion is also within this framework. We do not know how true these claims are. However, we are receiving information that this is being done to prepare the groundwork for Mr Ocalan’s elimination. Any attack on Mr Ocalan will not affect only Kurds and Turkey but will also have an impact on whole world.

- *For this reason and urgency, we are calling for immediate sensitivity to this threat of live from primarily the Kurdish people, the EU, relevant international organisations and public opinion to prevent this dangerous situation.*

### **Patterns of repression and destruction**

Failing to achieve its plans in Kurdistan, the AKP government has turned the ‘state of emergency’ into an excellent opportunity to increase attacks on the Kurds. In sharp violation of the rules of war, the government has demolished the Kurdish towns of Cizre, Sur, Nusaybin, Idil, Geve, Silvan and Sirnak, during which process they massacred hundreds of people, forcing 1.5 million to migrate. In addition, in Cizre they burnt 103 civilians alive. In addition, the increased attacks on Kurdish legal politics and political representatives. Among those they arrested are HDP co-chairs Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdog, DBP co- chair Sebahat Tuncel, KJA spokesperson Ayla Akat Ata, and Amed Municipality co-chairs Gulden Kisanak and Firat Anli. Also, many more municipality and council co-chairs, Central Executive Board and Party Council and party members have been arrested. Therefore, the EUTCC conference:

- *Calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners including the HDP co-chairs.*
- *Calls upon the state to withdraw all trustees and release the co-mayors and other deputies*

### **Purging the Kurds and the opposition groups**

After the coup attempt, Erdogan declared a state of emergency and purged all alleged and real opposition, turning Turkey into a vast prison. As the EP (RC8-1276/2016) noted, “[...] whereas these measures are disproportionate and in breach of basic rights and freedoms protected by the Turkish Constitution, of democratic values upon which the EU is founded and of the ICCPR; whereas the authorities have arrested 10 HDP deputies and some 150 journalists (the largest number worldwide); whereas 2,386 judges and prosecutors and 40,000 others are detained; whereas 129,000 public employees either remain suspended (66,000) or dismissed (63,000), most of whom had no charges brought against them (p. 02)”. Furthermore, 7 newspapers, 1 magazine, 1 radio station, and 375 associations have been closed down. In addition, 34 Kurdish mayors have been arrested while 57 municipalities in Kurdish areas have been replaced by the government’s appointed trustees. Turkey’s chief goal behind this wholesale purge is to ensure that the HDP will not pass the election threshold in the upcoming election. Therefore, the EUTCC conference:

- *Calls upon Turkey to cease all the attacks on Kurds, the opposition, journalists, students and trade unionists, and to remove the prohibitions on the NGO, newspapers, radio stations, magazines’ and TV stations.*

### **EU and their values**

The fact that human rights and fundamental freedoms are the very heart of the EU is expressed in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Especially in the preamble the values of peace, human dignity and fundamental freedoms are mentioned as crucial values of the UN and EU. The simple reality is that Turkey is publicly and unashamedly violating all of this. There is no peace as terrorism and even war is imposed on the Kurds. Freedom of press, expression or religion are violated as mentioned by UN Special Rapporteur, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.

We call on the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations:

- To support democratic forces and new democratic society models for peace in the Middle East;
- to acknowledge the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava;
- to acknowledge and support the North Syria Federation;
- to start an urgent Humanitarian Aid for the from IS liberated region in close cooperation with the local administration in Rojava;
- to take prompt action to halt the ongoing political coup taking place in their member state, Turkey;
- to follow up their statements of concern about developments in Turkey with decisive and effective measures.

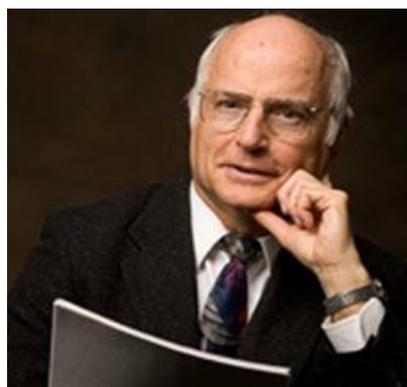
We call on the European Union and the European governments:

To freeze its accession process with Turkey until President Erdogan begins to reverse his attacks on democracy, clamping down on civil and political rights, the shutting down of political organisations and the arrests of hundreds of thousands of people:

- To make it absolutely clear to Erdogan that his suspension of democracy and repression of democratic political opposition must cease immediately;
- to call for the release of all elected politicians, MPs and mayors of the HDP and other parties, who have been detained in the present clampdown, and to reinstate them to the posts to which they were legitimately elected;
- to signal its opposition by withdrawing embassy staff from Turkey to demonstrate clearly that the present authoritarian politics of Erdogan are totally unacceptable;
- to take all the necessary measures to ensure that full democracy and civil rights are restored in Turkey;
- to make it clear to Turkey's political leaders that their current course poses a great danger to their own country by making it a pariah state, weakening its longstanding alliances and eroding its economic prosperity;
- to condemn strongly the discussion and the intention by the Turkish government on the relaunch of the death penalty;
- to send emergency delegations to visit the imprisoned MPs and mayors of the HDP.

**The European Parliament 8 December, 2016**

## **Moderator of the panel on the Middle East, the Kurds and their fight against terrorism(s)**



**Michael M. Gunter** is a professor of political science at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. He also is the Secretary-General of the EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC) headquartered in Brussels. In the past he taught courses for many years during the summer at the International University in Vienna, as well as courses on Kurdish and Middle Eastern politics, among others, for the U.S. Government Areas Studies Program and U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Institute in Washington, D.C.

Michael is the author of 10 critically praised scholarly books on the Kurdish question, and editor or co-editor of four more books on the Kurds, among others. He has also published numerous scholarly articles on the Kurds and many other issues in such leading scholarly periodicals as the *Middle East Journal*, *Middle East Policy*, *Middle East Quarterly*, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, *Orient*, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *Maghreb Review*, *American Journal of International Law*, *International Organization*, *World Affairs*, *Journal of International Affairs* (Columbia University), *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, *Current History*, *Third World Quarterly*, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, *Insight Turkey*, *Turkish Studies*, *Terrorism: An International Journal*, and *Arms Control*, among numerous others. His most recent books are *Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War*, London: Hurst Publications, 2014; and *The Kurds: A Modern History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2017.

## Moderators of the panel on regime-change and the evisceration of democracy in Turkey



**Dersim Dagdeviren** is a specialist in pediatric and adolescent medicine and a senior physician at pediatric intensive care unit of children's hospital, Gelsenkirchen. She is a board member of EU Turkey Civic Commission (EUTCC), a Brussels-based lobbying group and the Co-chair of Kurdish Academics Network (KURD-AKAD, registered association).

Dagdeviren is also a board member of doctors' union Marburger Bund, Europe's largest doctors' union. She writes a column at Frankfurt-based *Yeni Özgür Politika* and a member of German Press Association.

**Marie-Christine Vergiat** is an activist of the League of Human Rights since 1983. She was president of the federation Seine-Saint-Denis from January 2000 to January 2008 and a member of its central committee until March 2009. She was also vice-president of the federation of secular works (FOL) of Seine-Saint-Denis and member of the board of the League of Education from June 2005 to June 2013. Marie had local responsibilities to the Federation of Parents Councils (FCPE) of Epinay sur Seine from 2000 to 2009.

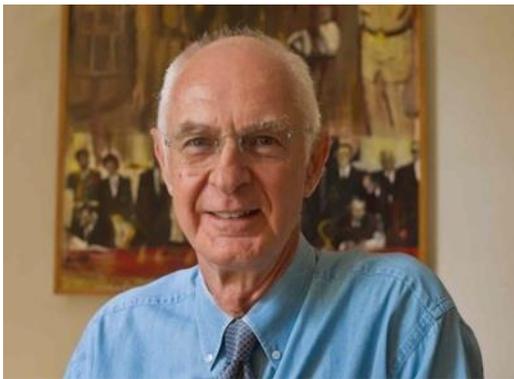


She was appointed for the European elections of 2009, as lead candidate of the Left Front in the south-east district (Rhône-Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Corsica). She was elected MEP in 2009 and re-elected in the 2014 European elections. Marie is now a member of the European Parliament from the Group of the European United Left / Nordic Green Left (GUE / NGL). She is a full member of the Committee of the Civil Liberties and the subcommittee on human rights and substitute member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. She is a member of the delegations for relations with Maghreb countries and the Pan-African Parliament. She is coordinator of the European Parliament Friendship Group with the Kurds, and member of the Group of Friends of Tunisia. She is co-president of the Intergroup "Social Economy" and member of the Intergroup Public Services and Common Goods.



**Aygül Berivan Aslan**, born on October 16th, 1981, is an Austrian politician, political scientist, lawyer and Member of Parliament for the Greens (Die Grünen) in the Austrian National Council. She is considered an expert on human and women's rights, and immigration issues. Aslan has her first political experiences during her high school years as a class and student representative.

During the last parliamentary elections in Austria, Aygül Berivan Aslan achieved second place in the national list of the Tyrolean Greens and was elected as MP in the National Council in 2013. She is a Member of the Executive Committee of the Green Bildungswerkstatt Tirol. Aygül Bêrivan Aslan attended elementary and secondary school in Telfs. She went on to study Economics at the Realgymnasium of Innsbruck. From 2005 to 2008, she studied Political Science at the Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck, where she then became a Research Assistant at the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology. Aslan's particular focus was on EU migration policy, gender studies and migration studies. In her thesis, she dealt with human rights in Turkey. In 2009 she enrolled in Business Law and began a Doctorate of Laws at the University of Innsbruck. She is currently a legal assistant in the Independent Administrative Senate in Tirol and is writing her dissertation. She also serves on the board of the non-profit association network Gender Studies, which is part of the inter-faculty research platform Gender Research at the University of Innsbruck and is the Vice-President of the Austrian Society for promotion of Kurdish Studies / European Centre for Kurdish studies.



**Jonathan Steele** is a veteran foreign correspondent and author of widely acclaimed studies of international relations. He was the Guardian's bureau chief in Washington in the late 1970s, and its Moscow bureau chief during the collapse of communism.

He was educated at Cambridge and Yale universities, and has written books on Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, South Africa and Germany, including *Defeat: Why America and Britain Lost*

*Iraq* (I.B.Tauris 2008) and *Ghosts of Afghanistan: the Haunted Battleground* (Portobello Books 2011).

## Other speakers whose speeches unfortunately are not available



**Dimitris Christopoulos** (Athens, 1969) is a Greek academic and activist. Elected President of the FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) in 2016. FIDH Vice President in 2013 after having chaired the board of the Hellenic League for Human Rights, the biggest and oldest Greek human rights association, ([www.hlhr.gr](http://www.hlhr.gr)) for eight years (2003-2011). Christopoulos has studied law in Greece, political science in France, legal theory in Belgium and holds a French PhD in Public Law.

Christopoulos has taught as visiting professor and has provided lectures in different universities in Europe and the US. Today, he serves as an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science and History of Panteion University in Athens. His academic publications and books reflect par excellence his activist interventions as a public intellectual in the field of human rights. Christopoulos is frequently interviewed by international or Greek media, writes regularly in the Greek press, contributing to the promotion of a rights awareness culture in the country, particularly within the current Greek financial crisis. Among his numerous publications, his last book (Athens, 2016) deals with the refugee situation in Greece.

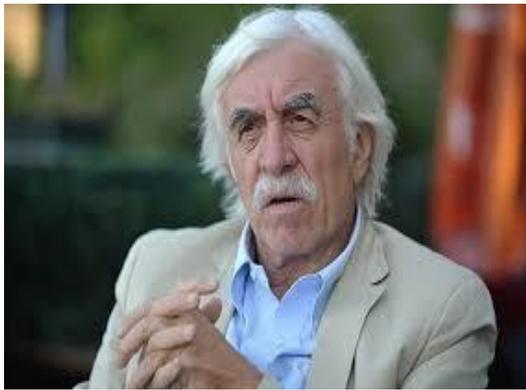


**Salih Muslim** was born in 1951 in a small village called Sheran (Arslan Tash) 7 kilometers outside the town of Kobanî. He received his primary education in Kobanî, secondary in Damascus and high schooling in Aleppo. Then, Salih moved to Turkey and studied at Istanbul Technical University, where he graduated with a BA in Chemical Engineering in 1977. He spent a year in London learning English prior to joining a Saudi Arabian oil company, Petromin Corporation, in

Riyadh from 1978 - 1990. He then returned to Syria and worked for a private engineering office in Aleppo and was also a member of the Syrian Engineers Association - Aleppo Branch.

Just like many Kurds, Salih's political interest developed at a very early age. He first became involved in the Kurdish movement during high school in Aleppo in 1965, when he was influenced by Barzani's ongoing revolt against the Iraqi government, the failure of which spurred him into becoming more active. Following his return to Syria in 1990, Moslem became actively involved in politics, especially in the Kurdish movement. In 1998, he was one of the founders of the National Democratic Alliance in Syria, and one of the six members

of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the National Democratic Alliance. However, following its dissolution in 2002, Moslem continued his political activism and was one of the founders of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in 2003. He became a member of the PYD's Executive Committee in 2003 until the Party's 4th General Conference in 2010, when he was elected as party president. From 2003 and 2010, Moslem had frequently been imprisoned and tortured by Bashar Assad's intelligence services both in Damascus and Aleppo. During the 5th General Conference in 2012, which was held for the first time in the city of Qamishli, Moslem was elected as Co-president of the PYD, together with Ms. Asiya Abdulla. He was re-elected as Co-president during the 6th General Conference on 20/09/2015. Moslem is married to Mrs. Aiysha Afandi and they have had 5 children - 4 boys (one martyred) and 1 girl.



**Cengiz Candar** is a well-known Turkish journalist, columnist, and author, writing for Turkey's *Radikal* daily newspaper. He received a bachelor at Ankara University, Department of Political Sciences and International Relations. He worked for different recognized Turkish newspapers like *Cumhuriyet*, *Hurriyet*, *Referans* etc. Cengiz lectured for two years on "History and Politics in the Middle East" at Bilgi University in Istanbul, and played a critical role as the special adviser of Turkish President Turgut Özal between 1991 and 1993.

Cengiz is an expert on the Middle East and the Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina), focusing on the Middle East, Turkish Politics, the Kurdish Issue and American Politics in the Middle East and the Balkans. He has currently published a highly discussed Report on Kurdish Issue and writes columns for "Radikal" daily newspaper.



**Hamid Bozarslan** is a professor of history and sociology. He received his PhD degree in history in 1992 (EHESS) and in political sciences in 1994 (Sciences-Po, Paris). Since 1999, he teaches at the EHESS (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales). He is the author of *Révolution et état de violence Moyen-Orient 2011-2015* (Paris, CNRS Editions, 2015) ; *Le luxe et la violence. Domination et contestation chez Ibn Khaldûn* (Paris, CNRS Editions, 2014), *Histoire de la Turquie. De l'Empire à nos jours* (Paris, 2013,

Tallandier), *Conflit kurde. Le brasier oublié du Moyen—Orient* (Paris, Autrement, 2009), *Une histoire de la violence au Moyen-Orient. De la fin de l'Empire ottoman à al-*

*Qaida* (Paris, La Découverte, 2008), *La question kurd : Etats et minorités au Moyen- Orient* (Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 1997).



**Devrim Arslan** has been working with Kurdish Media since 1996. She began her career by working for Ozgur Politika daily newspaper, published in Germany, for 4 year. Devrim worked for Turkiye' de Demokrasi then moved to Ozgur Gundem as an editor. In 2003 she was MHA European correspondent. She worked for Roj-TV as Reporter and Editor from 2007 to 2012 when Roj-TV Licence was suspended. In 2012 she started to work at head office of Firat

News Agency (ANF). She is currently ANF Editor.



**Joost Jongerden** is assistant professor at the Sociology and Anthropology of Development section of Wageningen University, the Netherlands, and has a special appointment as associate professor at the Asian Platform for Global Sustainability & Transcultural Studies at Kyoto University, Japan. He specializes in socio-spatial and socio-political analysis of rural development and conflict, and the development of socio-political alternatives.

His research focuses on the geography of Turkey and Kurdistan. He teaches several courses in sociological theory and socio-spatial analysis and has been involved in the organization of international seminars and conferences. Key publications are Joost Jongerden and Jelle Verheij (eds). 2012. *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir, 1870-1915*, Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers; Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden. 2011. *The spatial (re)production of the Kurdish issue: Multiple and contradicting trajectories*. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 13(4) pp. 375-388, Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden (Eds.). 2011. *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey, Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue*. New York: Routledge, and Joost Jongerden, 2007. *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds, an analysis of spatial policies, modernity and war*. Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers. Jongerden is member of the EUTCC Board since 2014.



The Greens | European Free Alliance  
in the European Parliament



EU Turkey Civic Commission

**13th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
"THE EUROPEAN UNION, TURKEY, THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE KURDS"**

**TURKEY, THE KURDS AND THE WAR IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST  
TURKEY – DEMOCRACY SUSPENDED  
ISIS AND THE CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST  
Brussels, European Parliament**

Wednesday 7th & Thursday 8th of December 2016

**PATRONS**

**ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS DESMOND TUTU**  
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, South Africa

**SHIRIN EBADI**  
Human Rights Lawyer  
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Iran

**BIANCA JAGGER**  
Council of Europe Goodwill Ambassador  
Chair of the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation, UK

**NOAM CHOMSKY**  
Institute Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy  
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

**LEYLA ZANA**  
European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought,  
Rafto Prize Laureate, Turkey

*In cooperation with*



Kurdish Institute of Brussels

**Wednesday, 7th of December 2016, 13.00-14.00**  
**OPENING SESSION, Room PHS 03C050 (“Paul-Henri Spaak Building”)**  
Interpretation in Turkish, Kurdish (passive), English, French, German

**OPENING REMARKS AND GREETINGS**

- Ms. Kariane WESTRHEIM, Chair EUTCC, University of Bergen, Norway
- Ms. Gabi ZIMMER, MEP, Chairwoman of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left Group (GUE/NGL) in the European Parliament, Germany
- Mr. Josef WEIDENHOLZER, MEP, Vice-President of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in the European Parliament, Austria

**OPENING SPEECHES AND SPECIAL REMARKS BY**

- Mr. Ebrahim EBRAHIM, Former Deputy Minister for International Relations and Co-operation, Member of the African National Congress National Executive Committee, South Africa
- Message from Prison; Mr. Selahattin DEMIRTAS and Ms. Figen YUKSEKDAG, Co-Presidents of HDP (The Peoples' Democratic Party), Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

**Wednesday, 7th of December 2016, 14.00-15.00**  
**Panel I, Room PHS 03C050 (“Paul-Henri Spaak Building”)**  
(Interpretation in Turkish, Kurdish (passive), English, French, German)  
**THE MIDDLE EAST, THE KURDS AND THEIR FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM(S)**  
Moderator  
Mr. Michael GUNTER, Tennessee Technological University, USA

**THE LINES IN THE SAND: SYKES PICOT AND THE HISTORIC ROOTS OF THE KURDISH CONFLICT**

- Mr. Hamit BOZARSLAN, Professor of History and Sociology, Paris, France

**ACCOUNTABILITY FOR VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW IN TURKEY**

- Mr. David PHILLIPS, Director of Peace-Building and Human Rights Program, Columbia University, USA

**TURKEY AND ITS ALLIES’ ROLE IN THE SYRIAN CRISIS**

- Mr. Fehim TASTEKIN, journalist, analyst and specialist in Turkish foreign policy, Caucasus, Middle East and EU affairs, Turkey

**THE GENEVA PEACE TALKS ON SYRIA AND THE KURDS**

- Mr. Kamran MATIN, Senior Lecturer in International Relations at Sussex University, UK

**QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION WITH MODERATORS & DISCUSSANTS**

**Wednesday, 7th of December 2016, 15.00-16.00**  
**Panel II, Room PHS 03C050 (“Paul-Henri Spaak Building”)**  
(Interpretation in Turkish, Kurdish (passive), English, French, German)  
**THE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVES FOR THE MIDDLE EAST**

**INTERVIEW SESSION WITH**

- Mr. Salih MUSLIM, Co-President of Democratic Union Party (PYD), Rojava-Syria
- Mr. Carne ROSS, Writer on International Affairs, US (on SKYPE)
- Mr. Jonathan STEELE, Veteran Foreign Correspondent and Author, UK

**Thursday, 8th of December 2016, 09.30-13.00**  
**Panel III, Room ASP 1G2 (“Altiero Spinelli Building”)**  
(Interpretation in Turkish, Kurdish (passive), English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Portuguese)

**REGIME-CHANGE AND THE EVISCERATION OF DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY**  
Moderators

Ms. Marie-Christine VERGIAT, MEP, GUE/NGL Group in the EP, France  
Ms. Dersim DAGDEVIREN, KURD-AKAD, Germany

**TURKEY AT THE CROSSROADS: THE DEATH OF THE PEACE PROCESS**

- Mr. Cengiz CANDAR, Journalist, Turkey

**THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND KURDISH MEDIA IN TURKEY**

- Ms. Devrim ARLSAN, Journalist, Firat News Agency (ANF), Kurdistan

**THE LYNCHPIN OF THE PEACE PROCESS**

- Mr. Simon DUBBINS, International Director of UNITE, UK

**THE PATH TO PEACE AND DEMOCRACY**

- Mr. Hatip DICLE, Co-Chair of the Democratic Society Congress (*DTK*), Turkey

**WHAT COULD/SHOULD THE HUMAN RIGHTS WORLD DO ABOUT TURKEY**

- Mr. Dimitris CHRISTOPOULOS, President of the FIDH - Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and History - Panteion University (Athens GR).

**THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR DUTIES**

- Ms. Ulrike LUNACEK, Vice-President of the EP, Group of the Greens - European Free Alliance in the European Parliament

**THE HDP’S POLITICAL VISION FOR A DEMOCRATIC TURKEY**

- Mr. Osman BAYDEMIR, HDP Vice-President, Turkey

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION WITH MODERATORS & DISCUSSANTS

**Thursday, 8th of December 2016, 15.00-17.30**  
**Panel V, Room ASP 1G2 (“Altiero Spinelli Building”)**  
(Interpretation in Turkish, Kurdish (passive), English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian)

**THE KURDS AND THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA FOR CHANGE IN TURKEY AND IN  
THE MIDDLE EAST**

Moderator  
Ms. Berivan ASLAN, MP, Green Party, Austria

**WHAT ROLE FOR WESTERN POWERS?**

- Mr. Michael RUBIN, Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, USA

**AGENDA FOR CHANGE: KURDISH PROSPECTS AND ALTERNATIVES**

- Mr. Zubeyr AYDAR, Member of the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK)

**INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY**

- Mr. Bill BOWRING, Professor of Law in the School of Law, Birkbeck, University of London and Author, UK

**SELF-GOVERNANCE, DE-CENTRALISATION AND CO-EXISTENCE**

- Mr. Metin RHAWI, Representative of European Syriac Union (ESU), North-Syria

**THE PERSPECTIVE OF A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE CYPRUS PROBLEM  
AND HOW THIS INFLUENCES THE WHOLE MIDDLE EAST AND THE KURDS**

- Mr. Takis HADJIGEORGIOU, MEP, GUE/NGL Group in the EP, Cyprus

**EQUALITY OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES**

- Mr. Johannes DE JONG, European Christian Political Movement (ECPM), The Netherlands
- QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION WITH MODERATORS & DISCUSSANTS

**Thursday, 8th of December 2016, 17.30-1830**

**Panel VI, Room ASP 1G2 (“Altiero Spinelli Building”)**

(Interpretation in Turkish, Kurdish (passive), English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Portuguese)

**CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL RESOLUTION**

EUTCC Board Members

Ms. Dersim DAGDEVIREN, KURD-AKAD, Germany

Mr. Michael GUNTER, Tennessee Technological University, USA

Ms. Kariane WESTRHEIM, University of Bergen, Norway