



**13th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
'THE EU, TURKEY, THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE KURDS'**

Wednesday 7 & Thursday 8 of December 2016
European Parliament, Brussels

**Turkey, the Kurds and the war in the Middle East
Turkey – Democracy suspended
ISIS and the crisis in the Middle East**

**The final resolution on the 13th Annual EUTCC conference:
Kurdish recommendations and demands**

Kurdish demands 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 ethnic and religious groups a guarantee of recognition.

European blackist

After the Kurdish Leader Mr Abdullah Öcalan was abducted and handed over to Turkey on 15 February 1999, guerrilla units withdrew to South Kurdistan (Northern Iraq) where they remained for five 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, at the beginning of 2002, they 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 (41st 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 Öcalan, 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 ten 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 Öcalan Campaign' launched by the major British trade unions the GMB and UNITE in April 2016, who called for the release of Mr Öcalan as an essential element for a peace process to be successful.
- Calls for restarting the peace process, freeing Mr Öcalan so that he has the freedom to create his negotiation team, and free contact and movement.

Mr Abdullah Öcalan under constant threat

Our conference received the information that AKP-MHP circles are discussing the elimination of Mr Abdullah Öcalan. 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 Öcalan's elimination. Any attack on Mr Öcalan will affect not 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 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, Gever, Silvan and Sirkak, 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, they increased attacks on Kurdish legal politics and political representatives. Among those arrested are HDP co-chairs Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, 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

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 European Parliament 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.' 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 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 urgent Humanitarian Aid for the, from IS, liberated region in close co-operation with the local administration in Rojava;
- to take prompt action to halt the ongoing political coup taking place in 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 the 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 to relaunch the death penalty;
- to send emergency delegations to visit the imprisoned MPs and mayors of the HDP.

The European Parliament 8 December, 2016

photo: Renaud Hoyois

