

FREEDOM FOR ABDULLAH ÖCALAN!

Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan must be allowed to meet with his lawyers and family and, ultimately, freed under conditions that allow him to play a role in finding a just and democratic political solution to Turkey's decades-old Kurdish conflict.

A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION



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Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament

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FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN
A POLITICAL SOLUTION
TO THE KURDISH QUESTION

Kurdish political leader, Abdullah Öcalan

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LIBERTÉ POUR
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FREE
ÖCALAN!

Index

- Page 3 - About the campaign: Freedom For Öcalan, A political Solution to the Kurdish Question
- Page 5 - Who is Abdullah Öcalan?
- Page 7 - Conditions in Imrali Prison
- Page 9 - A brief summary of Mr. Abdullah Öcalan's legal status
- Page 12 - Why does Öcalan's theories matter?
- Page 15 - What is Öcalan's role in Kurdish efforts for peace
- Page 18 - Official notary documents on 10 million signatures
- Page 19 - Legal efforts
- Page 20 - Mass Protests & Signature campaigns
- Page 23 - Hunger Strikes
- Page 24 - Vigil for Öcalan
- Page 25 - Trade Union campaign
- Page 27 - Honorary citizenship
- Page 29 - Delegations

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FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN
A POLITICAL SOLUTION
TO THE KURDISH QUESTION

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN: FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN, A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION

The international 'Freedom for Öcalan, A Political Solution for the Kurdish Question' campaign unites social movements, political parties, municipalities, unions, activists, intellectuals, and millions of Kurds and their friends worldwide around a shared goal: making a just and democratic political solution to Turkey's century-old Kurdish question possible by enabling Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan's participation in a renewed dialogue.

Abdullah Öcalan is a Kurdish political leader seen by millions of Kurds globally as their political representative. In February 1999, he was abducted in an international intelligence operation and sent to Turkey. He has been in prison ever since, barred from all contact with the outside world for years at a time. He has been subjected to torture and other cruel and degrading treatment.

Despite this, the movement Öcalan built and the people inspired by it are at the forefront of Kurdish struggles for self-determination and multi-ethnic, multi-religious movements for democracy in the Middle East. His theories inspire those fighting for self-determination, women's liberation, and an end to all forms of inequality and exploitation across the globe.

Turkey's unresolved 'Kurdish question' — the conflicts and political instability deriving from the Turkish Republic's violent denial of fundamental civil and political rights to 20 million Kurdish citizens—has cost tens of thousands of lives, displaced millions, and empowered hardline nationalists, religious fundamentalists, and autocrats worldwide. It is linked to many of the most serious regional and global challenges impacting the lives and well-being of millions—occupation, racism, the oppression of women, religious intolerance, economic exploitation, and the destruction of the environment.

The campaign is international in part because the Kurdish question is an international problem. Kurdistan is divided between four states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. It was European powers, including Britain and France, who created these divisions a century ago. Turkey's ability to wage war on Kurds across the Middle East is the result of decades of unconditional support from the United States and other NATO members—and Turkey's new strategy of playing those powers off of other states, like Russia and Iran, to extract anti-Kurdish concessions from all sides.

It is also international because Öcalan's solutions are international. His framework for a political solution to the Kurdish question could end a century of war and oppression in Turkey and neighboring countries. The universal theories that provide the framework for his solutions and be a model for people

FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN! A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION!

everywhere seeking alternatives to the great crises of our time—from steepening inequality to climate change to the rise of far-right autocrats taking advantage of growing disillusionment with the system.

When Öcalan is free to participate in a political process to resolve the Kurdish question and to continue to develop his ideas, the result will be more freedom and more peace for all of us. Unfortunately, the authoritarian leadership in Turkey knows this and greatly fears this scenario—and so, with the support of the international community, it has kept Öcalan in isolation for nearly three years in order to maintain its hold on power and prolong its endless wars.

In Öcalan’s last conversation with his lawyers, which occurred in 2019, he said that he could solve the Kurdish question in a week if given the chance— and that he had developed his ideas for a political solution to the Kurdish question even further since the Turkish government last abandoned peace talks. As Turkey expands its occupation of Iraqi Kurdistan and North and East Syria and its crackdown on dissent at home and abroad, the Kurdish people and other peoples of Turkey, the communities of the Middle East, and the world need a political solution now more than ever.

We are also more concerned about Öcalan’s security and well-being than ever before. Isolation is internationally recognized as a form of torture. For this form of torture to go on for three years is extremely dangerous. We do not know anything about Öcalan’s fate beyond the fact that he has recently received ‘disciplinary measures’ to block meetings on false pretenses and has allegedly been sent death threats.

This situation is unsustainable. For this reason, we make the following demand: Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan must be allowed to meet with his lawyers and family and, ultimately, freed under conditions that allow him to play a role in finding a just and democratic political solution to Turkey's decades-old Kurdish conflict.



WHO IS ABDULLAH ÖCALAN?



Abdullah Öcalan was born to a poor family in 1949 in the village of Amara (Turkish: Ömerli) in the province of Urfa in North Kurdistan (the Kurdish region of Turkey). Upon finishing secondary school, he found employment as a civil servant in the city of Amed (Diyarbakır). He later sat for university examinations and registered as a student in the Istanbul University Law Faculty. In 1971, he transferred to the prestigious Faculty of Political Science at the University of Ankara.

After the 1971 military coup, Öcalan observed the further denial and suppression of Kurdish identity and culture by the Turkish government. Affected by this problem, and moved by the Kurds' impoverished social and economic conditions, he and several friends decided to investigate the Kurdish situation further.

In April 1973, Öcalan brought together a group of six revolutionary university students in order to form an independent Kurdish political organization. This group saw Kurdistan as a colony whose population had been forcibly denied its right to self-determination. The group's primary goal was to change this situation.

The young movement gained momentum and found new followers. But as it did, the Kurdish aristocracy, rival political groups, and Turkish security forces became alarmed and violently attacked its adherents.

On November 27, 1978, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) was founded in a small village near Amed (Diyarbakır). A modern national liberation movement

was born, with Abdullah Öcalan clearly emerging as its ideological and political leader.

The Turkish authorities reacted harshly, tolerating none of the new party's peaceful political activity. Detentions and armed clashes followed. In 1979, observing signs of an imminent military coup, Öcalan and other members left Turkey, reorganizing in Syria. His foresight secured the survival of the nascent organization. On September 12, 1980, the Turkish military seized power, resulting in thousands of detentions and widespread torture.

Under the military regime, political struggle for Kurdish rights was impossible. All who tried were jailed, exiled or killed. From abroad, Öcalan continued to lead the PKK's political activities and began preparations for the armed resistance—which began in 1984.

Öcalan soon realized that armed struggle could not bring an ultimate resolution to the Kurdish question. In the early 1990s, he tried to shift the focus to a political solution that would address the dispossession and denial at the heart of the problem. In 1993, he first voiced the possibility that Kurds could live peaceably as equal citizens of a politically transformed Turkey instead of seeking a separate state. He called a unilateral ceasefire and held indirect talks with President Turgut Özal—but, following Özal's mysterious death on April 17, 1993, a new, bloody chapter was opened for the Kurds.

In 1998, during another unilateral cease-fire declared by Öcalan, Turkey threatened Syria with war over his presence in the country. To prevent conflict, Öcalan went to Europe in order to promote a political solution. But he was pushed out of Europe, too, and finally found himself in Kenya. On February 15, 1999, he was abducted in a clandestine international operation and brought to Turkey.

**“I almost want to say freedom is the goal of the universe.
I have often asked myself if the universe is not, in fact,
in pursuit of freedom.”**

— Abdullah Öcalan

CONDITIONS IN IMRALI PRISON



Ocalan's rights have been violated from the moment he was captured. While Turkish authorities are directly responsible, international complicity plays an important role in maintaining these rights violations.

Extraordinary renditions conducted without judicial processes, like Ocalan's kidnapping, are themselves contrary to international law.

Öcalan's trial was condemned as unfair by human rights organizations and international courts. In 1999, Amnesty International found that "the trial against Abdullah Öcalan violated both national law and international standards" and called for a complete impartial and independent retrial. A 2005 European Court of Human Rights Decision decision ruled that his trial was not independent or impartial, that he was not promptly brought before a judge, and that his defense was not given enough time to prepare.

For years, Ocalan was the only prisoner on Imrali Island. Now, there are four others. He is regularly held incommunicado, barred from contact with the outside world for months or even years at a time. Prolonged isolation and solitary confinement are considered to be forms of torture under international law. They are violations of the U.N. Mandela Principles, devised to protect the rights of prisoners¹.

In 2007, it was reported that Ocalan had been poisoned in prison. A European laboratory confirmed the presence of toxic chromium and strontium in hair

1. <https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/nelson-mandela-rules-protecting-rights-persons-deprived-libertysamples2>.

FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN! A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION!

Kurds around the world protested demanding accountability, but the prison administration faced no consequences.

In 2008, Ocalan's lawyers reported that Öcalan had been dragged by prison personnel to an adjoining room and forced to the ground by three persons while his cell was ravaged. When he protested against these brutal measures, he was explicitly threatened with death³. Once again, there was no accountability.

These human rights abuses are an issue of international concern.

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture is tasked with monitoring prison conditions in Turkey and other European states. The Committee and other European institutions have regularly failed to hold Turkey responsible for its systemic violations of Turkish and international law in regards to Öcalan's case.

The United States openly played a major role in Ocalan's capture, and has helped Turkey cover up widespread human rights abuses in his subsequent trial and imprisonment. Antony Blinken – who served on U.S. President Bill Clinton's National Security Council and is currently Secretary of State to President Joe Biden – said that “the United States was determined to bring Öcalan to justice. We provided all necessary assistance to Turkey. But we wanted him to have democratic rights, like everybody else. The judgment was carried out in an open and fair manner⁴.”



2. <https://www.freeocalan.org/articles/english/analysis-of-ocalan-intoxication-results-by-dr-kintz>
3. <https://www.freeocalan.org/articles/english/ocalan-tortured-prison>
4. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/aponun-teslim-emri-clintondan-38248135>

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF MR. ABDULLAH ÖCALAN'S LEGAL STATUS

EXECUTION VERDICT

1. Abdullah Öcalan has been held in İmralı Island Prison since February 15, 1999, when he was abducted from Kenya and brought to Turkey. Öcalan was sentenced to death after a trial in İmralı Island and his case was taken to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Grand Court of the ECHR ruled on May 2, 2005 that Article 6 of the convention, regarding a fair trial, had been violated, and it established retrial as a remedy. However, this request was initially rejected on the grounds that a retrial was not possible for Mr. Öcalan due to the Turkish laws enacted for him at the time. But then, without any legal change, another court, without informing Mr. Öcalan's lawyers, closed the file on the grounds that it had opened and reviewed the 17,000-page file and that a retrial would not lead to any change. In this way, the Turkish Government claimed that it was fulfilling the judgments of the ECtHR. Unfortunately, the CoE Committee of Ministers, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of ECtHR judgments, did not make any effort to counter this illegal manipulation and closed the file with a political decision, ruling that Turkey had fulfilled their judgment.

AGGRAVATED LIFE SENTENCE

2. The death penalty imposed on Mr. Öcalan has been converted into an aggravated life sentence, which was introduced into Turkish law for the first time after the abolition of the death penalty in 2002. With this sentence, a new type of punishment was introduced, which obliged him to remain in severe isolation until his death, i.e. without the possibility of parole. All subsequent sentenced prisoners were also subject to this mechanism. The isolation and aggravated life sentence against Öcalan was also taken to the ECHR. On March 18, 2014, the Court ruled that both the conditions of isolation and the aggravated life sentence were violations of Article 3 of the ECHR, prohibiting torture. The court also found that the violation begins not at the moment of the verdict, but from the moment of its birth. And it underlined that every prisoner must have the hope of release. This judgment has been on the agenda of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE after 7 years and continues to be monitored and is expected to be implemented. The Turkish Government, on the other hand, states that the aggravated life sentence will not be changed as it is regulated by law.

CONTINUOUS EXECUTION

3. Mr. Öcalan was the only civilian on İmralı Island until 2009. Since then, 5 inmates from other prisons were brought to the island. These prisoners were changed over time. As of today, apart from Mr. Öcalan, there are 3 prisoners in İmralı Prison. The ECHR's violation decision on March 18, 2014 on isolation covered the period between 1999 and 2009 and was defined as a violation of the prohibition of torture. After 2009, with the arrival of new prisoners, a new application was made to the ECHR as the isolation continued with the

same severity. This application was filed in 2011 on behalf of Mr. Öcalan and 5 prisoners. It has been 12 years since this application was made and all the processes related to this application have been exhausted and have reached the decision stage. However, the ECtHR has not yet made a decision on this case and there is no clarity as to when it will make a decision on this application.

NEW CASES

4. Apart from this ongoing case at the ECtHR, there is another case filed against Greece at the ECtHR in 2019, after the completion of the domestic legal process, upon the refusal to process Mr. Öcalan's asylum application while he was in Greece and his illegal delivery to Turkey. This case is also ongoing.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS DO NOT FULFILL THEIR DUTIES

5. As the isolation deepened and family and lawyer visits were completely banned, an individual application for measures was also submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) in 2021. Taking into account the gravity of the situation, the OHCHR, in a letter dated September 6, 2022, requested the Turkish government to "put an end to the incommunicado detention of the applicants in accordance with Article 92 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure and to allow the applicants immediate and unrestricted access to a lawyer of their choice." However, the state and government authorities did not comply with the Committee's request for this measure either. On the contrary, the government responded with new arbitrary family and guardian visits, telephone and lawyer bans. This application is still pending.

BAN ON FAMILY AND LAWYER

6. From the date of Mr. Öcalan's abduction to Turkey until today, numerous applications have been filed in Turkish domestic law regarding the conditions of isolation. It is not possible to give the number and breakdown of these here. These legal initiatives are still ongoing. Twice a week, applications are made to the prison administration and the relevant prosecutor's office requesting lawyer visits. However, these applications are not even answered. At the same time, applications are regularly made once a week for family meetings. For example, in 2022 alone, there were 98 requests for a lawyer meeting and 49 applications for a family meeting, which went unanswered.

The application for a family meeting is rejected due to the disciplinary punishment given to Öcalan and his friends for walking and chatting during sports hours. Öcalan and his friends first appeal these disciplinary penalties before the Execution Judge, but all applications are rejected. The appeals against these decisions are also rejected by the High Criminal Court without exception. Similarly, bans on lawyer visits every 6 months have become automatic. Lawyers are not informed about the disciplinary penalty that prevents family visit requests. Lawyers only learn about it in practice after the appeal period expires. Law

yers are also excluded from other legal processes.

In total, it is possible to say the following about the domestic legal process. To date, not a single positive decision or result has been obtained in thousands of applications and files related to Öcalan in the domestic legal process, from the prison administration to the prosecutor's office to the Constitutional Court. Without exception, all requests and applications have been rejected. Especially since 2021, the judiciary has not only rejected the requests, but has also turned into a part of the isolation mechanism by conducting this process without the knowledge of the lawyers and preventing their initiatives. Therefore, we cannot talk about a functioning domestic legal process in Turkey for Öcalan and his friends.

TURKEY DOES NOT APPLY DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

7. By not implementing the judgments of the ECtHR and the UNHRC, domestic legal mechanisms in Turkey also break the influence of international legal mechanisms and render them dysfunctional. Unfortunately, the Turkish judicial system is not implementing and rendering dysfunctional hundreds of international judicial decisions, such as the Kavala and Demirtaş decisions, based on the conclusions drawn from the Öcalan case. The island of İmralı functions as a laboratory for the Turkish judicial and political process where all kinds of lawlessness are tested. The conclusions drawn here are used against everyone, especially dissidents living in Turkey.

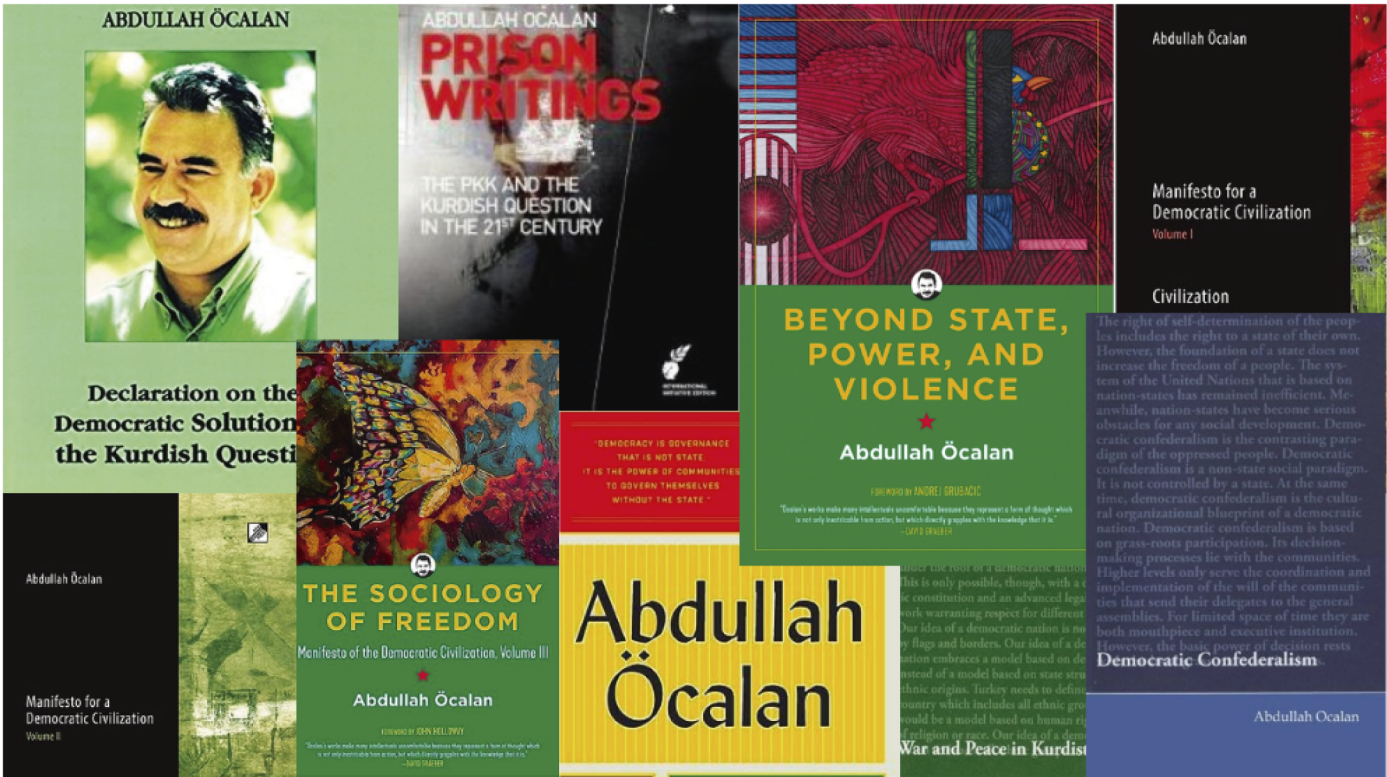
PERPETUAL TORTURE

8. Based on the facts stated above, we can say that Turkish domestic law is closed to Mr. Öcalan, and that it is even a means of concealing or providing legal cover for the isolation and torture practices. In this case, it is possible to interpret Mr. Öcalan's legal situation in the light of the ECtHR Decisions as follows: Since 1999, Mr. Öcalan has been held for 25 years in an unfair trial, i.e. without an acceptable legal basis and under conditions considered as torture, and it is a requirement of international law and justice that he be released and free as a matter of his right to hope.

WHY DO ÖCALAN'S THEORIES MATTER?



Despite these restrictions and violations of his rights, Abdullah Öcalan has used his time in prison to proactively seek comprehensive solutions to problems in Turkey and the region. Since his arrest, he has written 59 books, one protocol, and one 'Road Map.'



FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN! A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION!

In his writings, Öcalan proposed new political theories for the Kurdish movement that have redefined and revolutionized the concept of self-determination. A new nation-state, he argued, could not resolve the problems caused by the imposition of nation-states on a multi-ethnic and multi-religious region by foreign powers a century ago. By fighting for a nation-state, the Kurdish movement could inadvertently replicate the structures of power and oppression that states used.

Instead, he argued, Kurds and neighboring peoples should build bottom-up democracies based on the equality of all ethnicities, religions and languages, the liberation of women, cooperative economies, and protection of the environment. They could do this wherever they live, making borders irrelevant.

These theories inspired the multi-ethnic, multi-religious People's Protection Units (YPG), Women's Defense Units (YPG), and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that defeated the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria. They formed the basis for the unique political model of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, which set up autonomous governance despite threats from states and extremist groups on all sides, offering stability and promoting coexistence for women and the various ethnic and religious minorities throughout Syria.

**“If I am to be a freedom fighter, I cannot just ignore this:
Woman’s revolution is a revolution within a revolution.”**

— Abdullah Öcalan

The pro-democracy political and civil society movements resisting nationalist-Islamist autocracy in Turkey, led by the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), based its vision of pluralism, democracy, and women's liberation and its decision to unite the Kurdish struggle with the struggles of other oppressed groups in Turkey on Öcalan's ideas.

The slogan “jin, jîyan, azadî” — “woman, life, freedom” — which has become the rallying cry of the women-led protest movement challenging Iran's anti-women and anti-Kurdish regime comes from Öcalan's ideas and writings.

Öcalan's ideas also offered a unique framework for a political solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey—one that met and even surpassed international standards of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and could be implemented within existing borders without the use of force.

When Öcalan has been able to communicate these ideas to his supporters and the wider international community, democracy in Turkey and peace in the Middle East appeared as if they would prevail. From 2007 to 2011, his historic “Road Map” formed the basis for the first-ever round of negotiations between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state⁶.

From 2013 to 2015, he served as the lead negotiator in a second historic attempt to resolve Turkey’s Kurdish question at the negotiating table. During this time period, the ceasefire Öcalan called lasted over two years, the people of Iraqi Kurdistan and North and East Syria lived free from Turkish bombs and occupying troops, and unprecedented democratic space in Turkish politics allowed the HDP to win an astounding 13% of the vote.

However, peace and democracy threatened then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s grip on power—so he abandoned the talks, condemning Öcalan to isolation, Kurds and progressives in Turkey to dictatorship and Iraqi Kurdistan and North and East Syria to endless war. Today, as Turkey threatens all Kurdish gains abroad and cracks down on dissent at home, Öcalan has been barred from contact with the outside world for almost three years.

Authoritarian, nationalist, and religious fundamentalist regimes and the foreign powers that support them fear the spread of Öcalan’s theories because they can challenge oppressive ideologies and could bring long-term peace and coexistence to the Middle East. To prevent this from happening, they have maintained his isolation and escalated attacks on Kurds and progressive and democratic forces everywhere.

“The right of self-determination of the peoples includes the right to a state of their own. However, the foundation of a state does not increase the freedom of a people.”

— Abdullah Öcalan

6. http://www.freedom-for-ocalan.com/english/download/Abdullah_Ocalan_-_The_Road_Map_-_Summary.pdf

WHAT IS ÖCALAN'S ROLE IN KURDISH EFFORTS FOR PEACE?

The Kurdish movement has repeatedly taken unilateral steps to bring its armed struggle to an end and find a just, democratic political solution to the Kurdish question at the negotiation table.

They view armed resistance as a tactic of last resort, in line with international principles regarding the right to self-determination and the means by which it can be achieved. Courts have recognized the PKK as a legitimate party to a non-international armed conflict. Abdullah Öcalan has initiated numerous peace efforts himself and has created the political framework that makes peace possible. For more than 30 years, he has been struggling to transform the armed conflict in Kurdistan into a political one. By constantly advocating for a peaceful solution he has become the most important voice for peace in the Kurdish liberation movement. This has been implicitly recognized by the Turkish state, which sees him the “key figure” for a solution process.

Starting in the late 1980s, Öcalan stated in interviews with Turkish journalists that he would prefer a peaceful settlement with the Turkish state to an endless war. He declared the PKK's first unilateral ceasefire in 1993, knowing it was not a popular decision.

This was the first of nine ceasefires declared by the PKK—the most recent of which was declared in 2023. The government of Turkey adhered to just one: the 2013 ceasefire, which paved the way for ongoing talks between Öcalan and the state. It has never moved to implement a ceasefire without previous steps by the Kurdish side.

Despite his near total isolation in a maximum-security island prison in violation of Turkish and international law, Öcalan has outlined an overarching theoretical framework for a political solution that reconciles Turkey's territorial integrity with the Kurdish right to self-determination through democratization and social change, in line with principles of human rights and good governance found in the international treaties signed by Turkey and its allies.

In doing this, he has criticized his own earlier convictions on the role of violence and initiated a wider discussion in the Kurdish movement and Kurdish society about how to finally end the vicious circle of violence that has left its mark on the history of Kurdistan, the Middle East, and the world.

Kurdish political and military actors inspired by Öcalan's ideas have tested these theories on the ground, where they have proven successful in challenging the issues at the root of endless wars across the Middle East: occupation and authoritarianism, nationalism, religious fundamentalism, the oppression of women, ecological crises, and other problems. They addressed their own shortcomings and adapted to new circumstances.

No Turkish leader has ever made a comparably comprehensive proposal, nor have any reforms based on the experiences of 40 years of conflict been fully implemented in Turkey.

Two rounds of dialogue between Turkey and the Kurdish movement have taken place. While neither of these rounds of dialogue led to a successful solution, they proved that both sides could adhere to ceasefires and engage in discussion. From 2009 until mid-2011, secret negotiations, later known as the Oslo Process, were held between Öcalan, a government-appointed delegation representing the Turkish state, and senior Kurdish political figures.

The subject was a political solution to the Kurdish question. Based on the “Road Map to Negotiations,” which Öcalan authored in 2009 and which won admiration even from his Turkish interlocutors, the parties agreed on three protocols and contained a phased plan for an end of the conflict and a political solution to the Kurdish issue. The Turkish government, however, chose not to implement the plan, and war returned to Kurdistan.

Kurdish society has taken mass action to make peace—and Öcalan's participation in talks—possible. In September 2012, in an attempt to return to dialogue, more than 700 Kurdish prisoners across Turkey began a hunger strike. They were supported by countless ordinary Kurds and human rights activists in Turkey, in Europe, and around the world. They demanded the right to use the Kurdish language, an end to Öcalan's isolation, and the resumption of negotiations.

On the sixty-eighth day of the hunger strike, in November, Öcalan called for it to end—and it did. Despite total isolation, Öcalan maintained authority over the Kurdish community in and outside of Turkey, making him an inevitable participant in and leader of any possible future negotiations. The talks with the state delegation resumed, and on January 3, 2013, the very first BDP delegation was able to visit Öcalan at Imrali.

In March 2013, Öcalan called a ceasefire that lasted over two years. Arguably, this ceasefire allowed for the most significant democratic opening in a century of Turkish history and gave the Kurdish movement the space it needed to respond militarily to the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, saving countless lives in the Middle East and around the world.

These rounds of talks showed the importance of Öcalan as lead negotiator and the role of his ideas in finding solutions all sides could discuss and act on. His free and active participation in negotiations thus remains an important demand of Kurds and their allies around the world today.

Erdogan's government had entered the talks hoping that their ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) would win greater Kurdish support. This did not happen: Kurds took advantage of the democratic opening provided by peace to vote for pro-Kurdish parties. Since the government of Turkey's abandonment of talks in 2015, the Kurdish movement has repeatedly called for international support for a new dialogue. Erdogan, by contrast, has campaigned on war.

In 2019, when Öcalan was last allowed to communicate with his lawyers, he stated that he could resolve Turkey's Kurdish question within a week and expressed his wishes that Turkey's conflict with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria be resolved peacefully. The Turkish state, however, put an end to these meetings—and launched a new military operation against Syrian Kurds two months later.

The PKK has declared one unilateral ceasefire since the resumption of conflict. In February 2023, following the deadly earthquake in Syria and Turkey, the group declared an end to military action in Turkey for humanitarian reasons, with the stated aim of allowing all resources to be focused on rescue and recovery efforts.

It was extended through May 2023 in order to allow Turkey's elections to take place in an environment of peace. However, Turkish leaders failed to respond, maintaining Öcalan's isolation, bombing Iraq and Syria, and running their election campaign on fear and militarism. War continues today.

OFFICIAL NOTARY DOCUMENTS ON 10 MILLION SIGNATURES

The importance of Öcalan's participation in peace talks and the value of his theories to global struggles for freedom and democracy has inspired massive worldwide solidarity.

Kurds and their friends across Kurdistan, the Middle East and the world have engaged in mass campaigns intended to secure Öcalan's freedom and allow him to participate fully in finding a just and democratic political solution to the Kurdish question. These have involved a diversity of tactics and actors. Our campaign will unite and build on these comprehensive efforts.

Freedom for Ocalan International Initiative

Following Ocalan's capture in 1999, the international 'Freedom for Ocalan - Peace in Kurdistan' initiative was established⁷. The International Initiative regards itself as a multi-national peace initiative working for a peaceful and democratic solution for the Kurdish question that will see Kurds, Turks and all peoples of Mesopotamia living peacefully together. The International Initiative is committed to play its part in peace through intense lobbying and public relations work. Regular publishing and a balanced policy towards the public are a central part of its work.

⁷ You can follow the International Initiative online here: <https://www.freeocalan.org/about>.

LEGAL EFFORTS



For 25 years, Öcalan's lawyers have faced persecution, threats, and imprisonment themselves for demanding that Turkey implement its own laws and basic international principles regarding his case. This has resulted in several international legal victories.

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled in Öcalan's favor, finding that Turkey violated his right to liberty and security and to a fair trial, that the presence of a military judge in parts of the proceedings violated the right to an independent tribunal, and that the imposition of the death penalty pursuant to an unfair trial constituted cruel and inhuman treatment.

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture has repeatedly warned that Turkey's treatment of Öcalan in prison violates binding international law.

In 2022, 350 lawyers from 22 countries applied to Turkey's Ministry of Justice to visit Öcalan in prison. 750 lawyers from Turkey and more than 1,000 lawyers from Syria applied to represent Öcalan. In early 2023, Delegation Against Isolation visited Turkey representing them.

MASS PROTESTS



Every year on February 15, the anniversary of Öcalan's abduction from Kenya in 1999, Kurds all over the world demonstrate in protest.

On October 9, to mark the anniversary of his forced departure from Syria in 1998, demonstrations occur across Turkey and Kurdistan: including Gemlik, the town opposite Imrali Island, and in Kurdish cities in Syria, where Öcalan's ideas inspired the defeat of ISIS and where many Kurds knew him personally.

Every year on April 4, Öcalan's birthday, Kurds travel to Amara, the village where he was born, and celebrate the occasion by planting trees.

SIGNATURE CAMPAIGNS

During a signature campaign conducted in 2005-2006, around 3.5 million people from all parts of Kurdistan signed a statement affirming that they regard Öcalan as their political leader.

The number of signatures was remarkable considering that the campaign was conducted under immense restrictions—Turkey, Syria, and Iran declared it illegal. Several people who participated were convicted and sentenced to years in prison.

In 2015, an astounding 10.3 million signatures demanding freedom for Öcalan and recognizing him as a political representative were collected in Kurdistan, the Middle East and beyond and presented to the Council of Europe.

FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN! A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION!

In 2023, nearly three million signatures demanding freedom for Öcalan were collected from North and East Syria alone. The signatures were presented to the Council of Europe in August.

Buenos Aires, January 23, 2019

50 NOBEL PRIZE LAUREATES CALL TO END THE SOLITARY CONFINEMENT OF ABDULLAH ÖCALAN AND ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN TURKEY

We, the undersigned Nobel Prize Laureates, from diverse disciplines around the world, call on the government of Turkey and the International Community at large, to take immediate action at this critical moment to end the solitary confinement of Abdullah Öcalan and all political prisoners in Turkey.

In so doing we stand in solidarity with the hundreds of hunger strikers who are now pressing this same demand, including the Kurdish parliamentarian Leyla Güven, imprisoned in Diyarbakir, whose life is in imminent danger. We also join our support to the International Appeal for ending the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan and all political prisoners in Turkey, first released on January 12, 2019.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Argentina. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1980 – **Betty Williams**, Northern Ireland. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1976 - **Desmond Tutu**, South Africa. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1984 - **F. W. De Klerk**, South Africa. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1993 - **Jody Williams**, United States. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1997 - **José Ramos-Horta**, East Timor. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1996 - **Leymah Roberta Gbowee**, Liberia. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2011 - **Mairead Corrigan Maguire**, Northern Ireland. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1976 - **Oscar Arias**, Costa Rica. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1987 - **Shirin Ebadi**, Iran. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2003.

Dudley R. Herschbach, United States. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1986 - **Elias James Corey**, United States, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1990 - **Gerhard Ertl**, Germany. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 2007 - **Joachim Frank**, Germany / U.S. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 2017 - **John C. Polanyi**, Canada. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1986 - **Kary B. Mullis**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1993 - **Richard Henderson**, Great Britain. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 2017 - **Robert H. Grubbs**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 2005 - **Roger D. Kornberg**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 2006 - **Thomas R. Cech**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1989 - **Walter Gilbert**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1980 - **Yuan T. Lee**, Taiwan. Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1986. **Edward C. Prescott**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Economics 2004 - **Eric S. Maskin**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Economics 2007 - **Finn E. Kydland**, Norway. Nobel Laureate in Economics 2004 - **Oliver Hart**, Great Britain. Nobel Laureate in Economics 2016. **Alice Munro**, Canada. Nobel Laureate in Literature 2013 - **Elfriede Jelinek**, Austria. Nobel Laureate in Literature 2004 - **J. M. Coetzee**, South Africa. Nobel Laureate in Literature 2003 - **Mario Vargas Llosa**, Peru. Nobel Laureate in Literature 2010 – **Wole Soyinka**, Nigeria. Nobel Laureate in Literature 1986 - **Carol W. Greider**, United States.

Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2009 - **Edmond H. Fischer**, Switzerland / U.S. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 1992 - **Eric R. Kandel**, Austria. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2000 - **Erwin Neher**, Germany. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 1991 - **J. Robin Warren**, Australia. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2005 - **Jack W. Szostak**, Great Britain. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2009 - **Leland H. Hartwell**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2001 - **Louis J. Ignarro**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 1998 - **Sir Richard J. Roberts**, Great Britain. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 1993 - **Sydney Brenner**, South Africa. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2002 - **Thomas C. Sudhof**, Germany / U.S. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2013 - **Tim Hunt**, Great Britain. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 2001 - **Torsten N. Wiesel**, Sweden. Nobel Laureate in Medicine 1981 - **Anthony J. Leggett**, Great Britain. Nobel Laureate in Physics 2003 - **Gérard Morou**, France. Nobel Laureate in Physics in 2018 - **Kip Stephen Thorne**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Physics 2017 - **Sheldon Glashow**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Physics 1979 - **Steven Weinberg**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Physics 1979 - **William D. Phillips**, United States. Nobel Laureate in Physics 1997.



PROCES-VERBAL DE CONSTAT

L'AN DEUX MILLE QUINZE

LE 25 MARS

A LA REQUETE DE

The International Initiative « Freedom for Öcalan, Peace in Kurdistan » avec siège social à 1060 BRUXELLES, « Kurdistan National Congress » rue Jean Stas 41

Je soussigné, Célestin **PLUGERS**, Huissier de Justice, de résidence à 3090 OVERIJSE, Brusselsesteenweg 80

Me suis rendu au siège prénommé où j'ai rencontré une préposée de l'organisation soit Madame **OZLEM TANRIKULU**,

Elle me montre les signatures réceptionnées en réponse sur la pétition organisée. Au hasard je vérifie.

Le solde du constat de ce jour s'élève à 701.903 pour les villes Kurdes en Turquie et la Russie .

En supplément du constat du 10 février 2015 le total s'élève des lors à :

Constat du 10.02.2015 : 9.548.303

Constat du 25.03.2015 : 701.903

TOTAL : 10.250.206

Je joins la liste me remise en annexe.

HUNGER STRIKES

In 2007, a hunger strike began in Strasbourg, France, to protest Öcalan being poisoned. A wave of protests quickly spread across Kurdistan, Turkey, and Europe.

In a second hunger strike, which began in Strasbourg and Turkey in 2011, more than 700 Kurdish prisoners and many ordinary Kurds all over the world demanded the right to speak their mother tongue and insisted that the Turkish state negotiate with Öcalan.



In 2018 and 2019, a campaign of hunger strikes launched by imprisoned HDP MP Leyla Guven grew to involve hundreds of Kurdish political prisoners and activists in Turkey and beyond demanding an end to Öcalan's isolation. The hunger strikes resulted in Öcalan's first meetings with his lawyers in years in early 2019. The meetings occurred periodically until August 2019. He has not been allowed to meet with his lawyers since then.

VIGIL FOR ÖCALAN

Events to date (end of November 2023)

This new campaign was launched on 10 October – the day after the 25th anniversary of Abdullah Öcalan's expulsion from Syria that ended with his abduction by an international plot and imprisonment in Turkey. International supporters carried out 74 actions - one for each year of Öcalan's life - in 31 different countries. (At least that was the plan, but more events kept being added...)

Argentina, Australia (2 locations), Austria (92 locations), Bangladesh, Belgium (European Parliament Brussels and 2 other locations), Brazil, Colombia (2 locations), Cyprus, Denmark, East Timor, Ecuador, England (2 locations), Eswatini, France (Strasbourg and 6 other locations), Germany (11 locations), Greece (2 locations), India, Ireland, Italy (15 locations), Kenya (2 locations), Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Scotland, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain/Basque Country/Catalonia (6 locations), Sweden, Switzerland (6 locations), and Wales.

Those taking part included politicians, trade unionists, and activists, many of whom see links between Öcalan and the Kurdish Movement and their own struggles. The first message received came from women of the Bangladesh Garment Workers' Union, and there was strong support from other subjugated nations, such as the Basques. Among the many demonstrations and oral statements, were some more visual messages – a giant image of Öcalan in Munich, a street performance in Berlin, and a mock-up of Öcalan's prison cell in Lubjiana. The French authorities prevented the central event outside the Council of Europe in Strasbourg with a last-minute ban, but the parliamentary speakers gave their speeches inside the Council building instead.

These international actions were followed by over thirty demonstrations in different parts of Kurdistan, and more in the Kurdish diaspora, and by statements of support from Kurdish organisations everywhere. In Kurdistan, supporting groups have ranged from cultural and art organisations in North and East Syria, to Arab youth in Şengal. The call for Öcalan's freedom made in Amed (Diyarbakir) was supported by 172 different organisations.

On 24 October, street stalls were held in many European cities, and on the weekend of 11-12 November marches were organised by Kurdish youth movements in Europe and Canada.

Alongside many smaller meetings, and further statements from groups and individuals, there have been discussions and support statements at the International Women's Forum in Düsseldorf; at the World Youth Conference in Paris - attended by representatives of over sixty organisations; at the Dialogue Forum in Raqqa – attended by 250 women; and at the international Art and Freedom Conference organised in Basel by the Academy for Democratic Modernity. There has been a conference at the University of Rome, and a press conference at the Italian parliament, and Öcalan's situation was raised in the Parliament of New South Wales. Support

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from artists has included an installation in Paris with a prison cell for each year of Öcalan's incarceration.

We have also prepared postcards to be sent to İmralı Island prison, and we have put together information and a selected reading list for Öcalan book day on 10 December, to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We are encouraging activists to use this day for actions that can make more people familiar with Öcalan's liberatory ideas. World issues, from climate change to the war in Gaza, all highlight the importance of his insights and approach.

We know that different organisations will produce their own projects in support of the campaign, which we can share to boost mutual solidarity and raise the profile of the campaign call for Öcalan's freedom and the political solution to the Kurdish question.

On June 25, 2012, Kurds began holding a daily vigil in front of the Council of Europe building in Strasbourg. They are calling for Öcalan to be freed and are determined to continue the vigil until this goal is achieved. This vigil remains ongoing at present.

Trade Union Campaign



TRADE UNION CAMPAIGN

The Freedom for Öcalan UK trade union campaign was launched in 2016 in the UK parliament by UNITE and the GMB, following mass outrage in the union movement at Turkey's support for ISIS and refusal to help the Syrian Kurds defend themselves against the extremist group in Kobanê.

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Since then it has grown to include 14 major unions and won support from the Trade Union Congress. Unions from other countries across Europe, Latin America, and Africa have also joined the campaign and launched efforts of their own.

In July 2023, a coalition of over 40 unions, local governments, parties and movements, and intellectuals held a press conference in Brussels demanding urgent action to guarantee Öcalan's safety and well-being.



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HONORARY CITIZENSHIP

Eight municipalities have given Öcalan honorary citizenship. Many are in Italy, one of the countries through which Öcalan traveled before his capture.



Leaders in these municipalities have spoken out against Öcalan’s isolation, demanded a political solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey, and protested against Turkish attacks on North and East Syria.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES



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Conferences on Öcalan's theories have been held in different countries in Europe, Latin America, Kurdistan, and the wider Middle East, attracting attention from political parties, social movements, academics, activists, and others seeking to understand his ideas and the ways in which the Kurdish movement implements them in practice and build international solidarity.



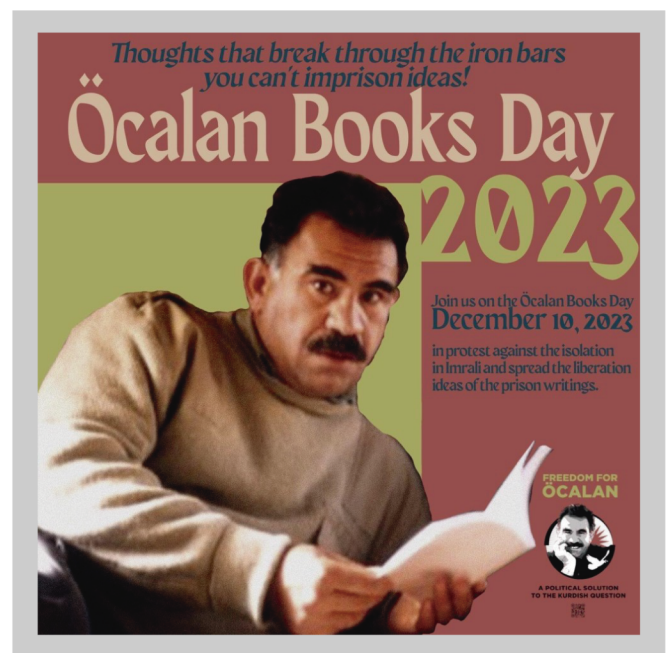
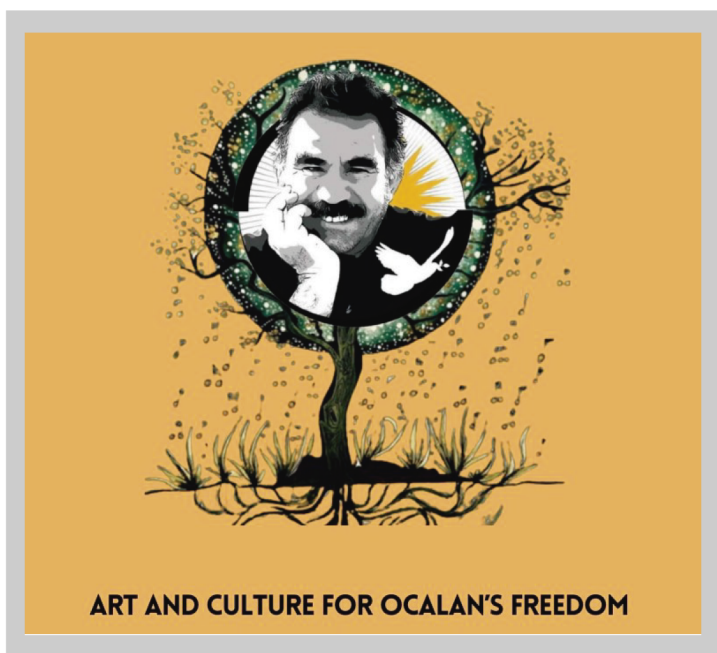
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In 2023 alone, international conferences were held in Hamburg, Germany and Bogota, Colombia. These conferences saw hundreds of participants despite active censorship and repression.



Delegations

In 2005, an ad-hoc delegation attempted to visit Imrali following a year of visit bans imposed on Öcalan. For the past 10 years, international peace delegations have been organized to assess Öcalan's situation, demand meetings and an end to isolation, and meet with legal experts and human rights organizations working for peace.





**Freedom For Ücalan,
A Political Solution to the
Kurdish question**

#FreeÜcalan4PoliticalSolution