

The PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) publicly renounces the armed struggle

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A few days after its imprisoned leader Abdullah "Apo" Ocalan issued a call to his party to do so, the PKK (Workers Party of Kurdistan) central committee declared the end of the armed struggle and thereby an end to the strategy which it has pursued since its foundation.

The August 9 statement declares that over a period of four weeks beginning the first of September the PKK will withdraw from Turkey. In so doing it will end its "armed struggle" against the Turkish state as well as the violent conflicts between the PKK and the KDP (Democratic Party of Kurdistan), a rival Kurdish organisation in northern Iraq. Following this withdrawal, the PKK seeks to transform itself into a civil, strictly political organisation that will work towards the "project of a democratic Turkish republic", i.e., the democratisation of the existing state. In addition, the statement declared that it is senseless to oppose the "new world order", and that it is necessary to adapt.

A press statement distributed by the "Kurdistan Information Centre" on August 9 reads: "In future the party (PKK) will re-determine its position in the new world order. Instead of fighting against the new world order, it will assert its right for a position and continue its resistance with political means. It has been established that the armed struggle is an out-moded method and that although the armed struggle had its justification and necessity, the last 100 years demonstrate that it has lost its value. Instead political resistance has grown in importance. Those forces which are not able to adapt will fade away into insignificance." The text continues that the hegemony of America and its "new world order" will have consequences on a global scale as well as for the Middle East. "Whichever forces in the Middle East exercise resistance will sooner or later be required to adapt accordingly to this new order."

The question remains whether the PKK withdrawal can proceed smoothly, and then there is the issue—where

should the fighters go? Up until now the Turkish government and army have insisted that they would pursue the PKK as far as northern Iraq. And the KDP, which is allied with Ankara, has emphasised that it would not tolerate the PKK in northern Iraq.

This means the organisation will probably flee to Iran, but how long they can hold out there is another question. There is no reason to assume that the Mullah regime in Iran, which suppresses its own Kurdish minority, will have more scruples than Syria when it comes to wiping out the PKK. In order to signal its willingness and keep its options open in this respect, Teheran signed a security memorandum with Turkey last Friday, agreeing a binding military procedure against the PKK.

The consciousness with which the PKK offered itself to the rulers in Turkey was already evident from the summation made by Ocalan at his trial, a speech with which the PKK leadership expressed its solidarity. On July 19, two weeks after the pronouncement of the death sentence against Ocalan, the pro-Kurdish *Özgür Politika* published an interview with Duran Kalkan, a leader of the AGRK (military arm of the PKK) and member of the Presidial Council of the PKK on the web site of the *Kurdistan Observer*:

"In a sense, Europe is going perhaps through a change in its approach to the [Kurdish] problem. It could be said that Europe is moving away from an approach that was centred around a very narrow, simple economic interest, to a political approach that takes into account the problems of Turkey, that of the Kurds and the region. Of course, at this point, these are clues only.... Germany has a heavy responsibility for the process [Ocalan leaving Europe] taking a turn like this [his capture] and lack of a solution [to Kurdish question] prior to all of these developments. [Germany] should remember this and develop a fitting approach. This is so, both for its own interests and due to the responsibility it bears."

Duran Kalkan made a direct offer of the services of the PKK to the United States. He noted that the US had led the struggle against the PKK and for the kidnapping of Ocalan, and he then dealt in depth with the situation in the primarily Kurdish occupied regions of northern Iraq.: “The US approaches the Kurdish question [in Turkey] within a framework that encompasses a system of [wider] interests. This is a comprehensive approach. Due to this approach, the US is intimately involved with the problem.... However, the US has not been able to initiate a fruitful process [of solving the problem]. It is mistaken on the issues of how and where the problem is going to be solved. The US has not found and held on to the forces that could bring a solution. The forces that the US deems capable of solving the problem, fail to do so....

“As long as the US insists on its current approach in the region, the success it obtained in other parts of the world will elude it in this area. The Kurdish question continues to play the key role [for the success], in this sense. Everyone and we, too, know very well the extent of the US responsibility/involvement.... [We hope] it will gradually adopt a more realistic approach taking into consideration the realities of the region and in its search for a solution to Kurdish question, it [considers] the plight of the Kurdish people [in Turkey], too.”

In other words, should the US use its influence with Ankara to make some concessions with regard to the Kurdish question the PKK would no longer stand in the way of the North of Iraq being used as a staging post for the overthrow of the Iraqi government and the setting up of a pro-American puppet government.

Despite its name the PKK was always a bourgeois nationalist organisation. It regarded the suppressed Kurdish workers and peasants in the southeast of Turkey not as part of the working class but, first and foremost, as a nation which was being repressed by another nation—Turkey. The liberation of the Kurdish nation was the overriding priority. The aim of the armed struggle was to put pressure on the ruling class in Turkey and the imperialist powers which supported Turkey and force them into an agreement.

It was not the power of its programme which secured for the PKK the sympathy and support of many Kurds. Rather it was due to disappointment with the capitulation of the left and trade union organisations—a process which was already evident at the end of the 70s. It was these organisations that directed the resistance to the intensifying exploitation and suppression, accompanied by growing chauvinism, into the channels of Kurdish

nationalism. In light of the cowardice and nationalism of the trade unions, social democrats and Stalinists, the “armed struggle”, carried forward with great sacrifices on the part of many young Kurdish peasants and students, acquired the gloss of radicalism.

At the same time the PKK was aided by a number of countries in conflict with Turkey who looked upon the Kurds as a means to further their own interests. This led many Kurds to believe that the strategy of the PKK was a more “realistic” means in the struggle for democratic rights than a joint movement of the working class for socialism.

Today, however, the intensified polarisation of classes in Turkey, as in every other country, prohibits any concessions on the part of the ruling classes regarding democratic and human rights. This is already clear under conditions where the fascist party the “Grey Wolves”, the MHP, is represented by numerous ministers in the governing Turkish coalition as well as occupying the post of vice prime minister. In addition the enormous growth in Turkey's political and economic significance due to its key geo-strategical position means that no imperialist power is prepared to jeopardise its relations with Ankara on account of the Kurds. This applies to the countries of the European Union, and in particular Germany—a point underscored by the recent visit to Turkey by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. The PKK was forced to conclude that all that remained was peace with the Turkish state at any price.

At the same time the bitter but still politically disorientated protests by Turkish workers against the IMF-dictated “reform plans” of the government—a drastic increase in retirement age and measures to facilitate privatisation—indicate the real allies of the suppressed Kurdish people. Only on the basis of a socialist programme uniting workers and poor peasants irrespective of nationality in a struggle for the abolition of the profit system is it possible to guarantee the democratic and cultural rights of the Kurds.



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