

# Kurdish Workers Party dissolves itself amid deepening war in the Middle East

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At its 12th Congress, convened between May 5 and 7, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) announced its decision to dissolve and end its armed struggle.

Founded in 1978, the PKK launched an armed struggle in 1984 with the aim of establishing an independent Kurdish state, but long ago abandoned this demand. Since 1984, the conflict with the Turkish state has left tens of thousands of people, mostly Kurds, dead and millions displaced.

The decision follows a process that began with a call on October 22 by Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), an ally of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an. Bahçeli said that Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, could be released and permitted to address parliament if he announced that the PKK had been dismantled.

Following negotiations with a delegation from the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party), Öcalan called on the PKK to lay down its arms and dissolve itself on February 27. Proposing "integration with the state", he effectively declared his party's historical and political bankruptcy.

In the congress's final declaration, the PKK Congress Board stated:

"The Extraordinary 12th Congress evaluated that the PKK's struggle has dismantled the policies of denial and annihilation imposed on our people, bringing the Kurdish issue to a point where it can be resolved through democratic politics. It concluded that the PKK has fulfilled its historical mission. Based on this, the 12th Congress resolved to dissolve the PKK's organizational structure and end the armed struggle, with the implementation process to be managed and led by Leader Apo [Abdullah Öcalan]. All activities conducted under the PKK name have therefore been concluded."

The final declaration also stated:

Leader Apo, by referring to the period before the

Treaty of Lausanne and the 1924 Constitution, where Kurdish-Turkish relations became problematic, proposed a framework for resolving the Kurdish issue based on the Democratic Republic of Turkey and the concept of a Democratic Nation, founded on the idea of a Common Homeland and co-founding peoples. The Kurdish uprisings throughout the history of the Republic, the 1000-year Kurdish-Turkish dialectic, and 52 years of leadership struggle have shown that the Kurdish issue can only be resolved based on a Common Homeland and Equal Citizenship.

This nationalist perspective neither explains anything, nor offers a way forward. The so-called "Common Homeland" and "Equal Citizenship" are merely reiterations of the failed notion of reforming or democratising the existing bourgeois nation-state. In reality, the Turkish bourgeoisie is no less incapable of and opposed to the establishing of a genuinely democratic regime than it was in 1923, when the Turkish Republic was founded. The same structural impotence and counter-revolutionary class position applies to the Kurdish bourgeoisie.

As Leon Trotsky, who led the 1917 October Revolution together with Vladimir Lenin, explained in his Theory of Permanent Revolution, the bourgeoisie in the backward capitalist countries is incapable of solving the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution, such as securing independence from imperialism and establishing a democratic regime, in the face of the growing threat from the working class. These tasks fall to the international working class, which is the only social force capable of abolishing the national borders and capitalist system that reproduce all relations of oppression and persecution in the direction of the bourgeoisie's domination.

Today the Turkish and Kurdish bourgeoisies are tied to imperialism by a thousand threads and its hostility to the threat of socialist revolution by the working class eclipses that of a century ago. Moreover, the Turkish bourgeoisie, which a century ago was incapable of a democratic solution to the Kurdish question, will always tend to see the large Kurdish population inside the country as a "separatist threat" under

conditions of an imperialist war of redistribution aimed at redrawing the maps in the Middle East, no matter what kind of agreement is reached with the Kurdish bourgeoisie.

Workers and youth will welcome the end of a bloody war that has cost thousands of lives, served to divide the working class on ethnic grounds and been used by the state as a pretext to suppress democratic rights. However, it is essential to expose the underlying process that led the PKK to dissolve itself and the falsity of its claims of “democracy and peace”.

Ankara’s and the PKK’s claims of democracy and peace come against the backdrop of the consolidation of a presidential dictatorship in Turkey that has eliminated basic democratic rights and the escalation of the Gaza genocide in the Middle East. Accelerated by Trump’s return to power in the US, these trends are global phenomena stemming from the growing crisis of the capitalist system. Thousands of political prisoners are currently in jail; in recent months elected mayors of the DEM Party and the Republican People’s Party (CHP) have been dismissed and arrested, and millions of people denied the right to vote and be elected.

Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Istanbul mayor and presidential candidate for the CHP, is the most significant example of a political arrest in the midst of “peace and democracy” negotiations between Ankara and the PKK. Erdoğan himself had hinted that İmamoğlu would be targeted, despite the allegations of corruption levelled against him not requiring arrest. The main reason for his arrest was that İmamoğlu was ahead of Erdoğan in the latest presidential polls.

Claiming that a regime which violates basic democratic rights, such as fair trials, the right to vote and be elected, freedom of expression and the press, and freedom of assembly, can lead a great democratisation is a deception.

Moreover, the same regime, in line with the reactionary interests of the Turkish bourgeoisie, is deeply involved in the US-led imperialist wars in the Middle East. And therein lies the key to the attempt to reach an agreement between the Erdoğan government and the Öcalan-led PKK. As stated in the final declaration of the PKK congress: “Current developments in the Middle East within the scope of World War III also make the restructuring of Kurdish-Turkish relations inevitable.”

The PKK’s decision to dissolve itself came at a time when all imperialist powers and capitalist states are waging wars for the redivision of the world that could surpass the two world wars of the twentieth century.

The US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine has brought the whole world to the brink of nuclear conflict. The Trump administration has declared a program of global conquest and hegemony targeting both China and its own allies. The US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza is deepening with the implementation of Trump’s ethnic cleansing plan to expel more than two million Palestinians. Regime change in Syria has the potential for a new conflict pitting the occupying allies, Turkey and Israel, against each other and various other forces

in the country.

A comment in the *Middle East Eye* on Öcalan’s call in February stated, “Many insiders in Ankara believe the government’s motivation for engaging in talks with Öcalan is linked to escalating regional tensions between Israel and Iran.”

The US is using Israel as a spearhead in its imperialist plans for domination in the Middle East, particularly targeting Iran and its allies. As Israel has expanded its occupation of Syria and launched air strikes on the military infrastructure of the new Damascus regime, its rivalry with its ally Turkey, which occupies northwest Syria and has close ties with the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) regime, has sharpened.

The declaration by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar that the Kurds in Syria are “natural allies” has raised concerns in Ankara. The People’s Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish nationalist group allied with US forces in Syria, is affiliated with the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a sister organisation of the PKK. Ankara is trying to bring the YPG forces, which lead a *de facto* autonomous administration in Syria, to an agreement with HTS, thus making them part of the Syrian army and putting an end to their autonomous structure.

This geopolitical situation is the main shaper of the agreement between Ankara and the PKK. At the beginning of the process, last October, Erdoğan said: “While the maps are being redrawn in blood, while the war that Israel has waged from Gaza to Lebanon is approaching our borders, we are trying to strengthen our internal front.”

An agreement between the Turkish and Kurdish elites, both US allies, facilitates Washington’s imperialist domination plans. The Trump administration’s main focus now will be on aligning Israel and Turkey in the Middle East under the leadership of US imperialism, especially against Iran and its allies.

Turkish and Kurdish workers and young people must develop their own independent, united strategy against the imperialist powers and their capitalist proxies, who exploit peoples’ aspirations for democracy and peace for their own reactionary ends.

The only way to end the oppression of the Kurdish people and secure their democratic rights is to end the genocide in Palestine and the imperialist wars in the Middle East. The allies of the workers of the region in this struggle for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East against imperialism and capitalist nation states are the American, European, and international working classes.



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