

Kurdish PKK withdraws its forces from Turkey

Baran Demir, Ula Sevinç
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The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) announced Sunday, October 26, that it had decided to take "new practical steps" to remove "all its forces in Turkey" to move to the second stage of negotiations with the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The statement said, "the laws necessary for freedom and democratic integration to participate in democratic politics must be enacted without delay."

Following the statement, Sabri Ok, a member of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) Executive Council, answered questions from the press and listed their demands as follows: 1) "Special laws specific to the PKK or the process" should be enacted. 2) "Leader Apo [imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan] ... must be granted physical freedom as soon as possible." 3) "The Parliamentary Commission must go to Leader Apo immediately and listen to him."

Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) co-chairs Tülay Hatimoğlu and Tuncer Bakırhan described the decision as "historic" in a statement, saying: "At this point, the first phase of the process has been completed. With the completion of the withdrawal, a new page has been turned... It is time to move on to the second phase, which is a much more critical and vital phase. That is, it is time to transition to social peace through legal and political steps."

The DEM Party listed its expectations from the government as the creation of "free working conditions" for Öcalan, a preference for "inclusive journalism instead of divisive journalism" in the media, and the "implementation of transitional and democratic integration laws."

The DEM Party's Delegation, which last met with Öcalan on October 3, held talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and National Intelligence Organization (MIT) Director İbrahim Kalın on

Thursday evening as part of the negotiation process.

A statement released by the DEM Party explained, "During the meeting, we conducted comprehensive assessments on the stage reached in the Peace and Democratic Society Process and what needs to be done going forward. We are pleased to note that we are in mutual understanding and agreement on taking steps to ensure the process progresses more quickly and healthily."

The negotiations have nothing to do with the pursuit of "peace and democracy." This is evidenced by Thursday's statement by Selahattin Demirtaş, the imprisoned former leader of the People's Democratic Party (HDP), predecessor of the DEM Party.

Demirtaş, who supported the negotiations, expressed his disappointment at the failure of his expectations as follows: "So it wasn't enough; the operations targeting the opposition, and especially the CHP, have further deepened the division. Political prisoners who have served their 30-year sentences, even sick prisoners, have not been released from prison. Not a single municipality under trustee has been returned to the people. Without strengthening Kurdish-Turkish brotherhood, Turkish-Turkish division has been added on top of it."

Turkey's ruling elites have approached the negotiations from the outset as a security issue within the framework of the "terror-free Turkey" discourse. In a speech made one day before the PKK's statement, Erdoğan said, "Have we saved our country from the scourge of terrorism? Will we continue to work together, hand in hand, to save 86 million people from the swamp of terrorism? At this point, we are patient, sincere, and calmly moving towards our goal... First, we will achieve a terror-free Turkey, and then a terror-free region as our most lasting achievement."

While Ankara acts in line with US imperialist plans in the Middle East, it is trying to strengthen Turkey's hand in its growing competition with Israel. Erdoğan sought to cement his "friendship" with US President Donald Trump by giving his full support to Trump's "deal" on Gaza. At the same time, Ankara is trying to turn the PKK-led Kurdish movement from an enemy into an ally with the critical help of Öcalan.

When negotiations first came up last year, 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. We want 85 million of us to come together under the common denominator of Turkey."

Referring to the PKK's disarmament ceremony on July 11, Erdoğan said, "Today, a new page in history has been opened. The doors to a great, strong Turkey have been thrown wide open," and put forward the perspective of a "Turkish-Kurdish-Arab alliance."

Co-chair of the KCK Executive Council Cemil Bayık attributes the motive for initiating negotiations to the same geopolitical basis. Speaking to *Fürat News Agency* on October 28, Bayık stated: "The Abraham Accords between Israel and the Arabs meant a weakening of this fundamental power based on Turkey's geopolitical position... Add to this the fact that the energy route [India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor] determined at the summit in India bypasses Turkey, and a real survival problem has emerged for Turkey."

Bayık added: "While it [Turkey] had previously turned the crushing of Kurdish Freedom Movement [PKK] into a tool for survival, it now finds itself facing a real survival problem. When Israel neutralized Hamas and Hezbollah and increased its influence in the Middle East, it became fearful that the price of their war against the Kurds would be heavy."

Under conditions where Israel is increasing its influence in Syria and declaring Syrian Kurds as "natural allies," Ankara is demanding that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the sister organization of the PKK, also lay down their arms and submit to the Al-Qaeda-rooted Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) regime in Damascus. Otherwise, Ankara threatens to launch military operations against the SDF. According to press reports, an agreement has been reached between HTS

and the SDF on integration. Under this agreement, the SDF will be integrated into the Syrian army, receiving three divisions, three brigades, and a 30 percent share under the general staff command.

The US, which still has armed forces and bases controlled by the SDF in northeastern Syria, supports negotiations between Ankara and the PKK and advocates for the SDF to reach an agreement with Damascus. The policy of Washington, which invaded Iraq in 2003, provoked the regime change war in Syria in 2011, and has been the main force behind the genocide in Gaza since October 2023, is driven by the urge to bring the Middle East under its full imperialist domination. This means uniting its allies in the region against Iran, which is in the crosshairs, and eliminating the influence of Russia and China in the Middle East. The fact that Turkey and Israel, two critical allies of US imperialism in the region, are on a collision course that could lead to war could upsets all of Washington's plans and interests.

The role played by the growing conflict of interests between Turkey and Israel in the initiation of the Ankara-PKK negotiations is clear. However, just like Israel, the policies of the Turkish and Kurdish elites, who serve US imperialism and pursue their own reactionary interests, have no progressive role. They are inherently incapable of and opposed to realizing the aspirations of the Turkish, Kurdish, and other peoples for peace, democracy, and social equality. Far from consistently opposing imperialism and Zionism, they collaborate with them.

Opposing imperialism and Zionism and fighting for genuine peace, democracy, and social equality requires uniting and mobilizing workers in the Middle East with their class brothers and sisters in the imperialist countries, independent of all capitalist parties and interests, on the basis of a socialist programme. This is the perspective for which the Sosyalist Eşitlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party – Fourth International) is fighting.



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