

Türkiye's new bill demands the Kurdish PKK's liquidation, offers nothing in return

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The government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan submitted the “Bill on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration” to parliament on Wednesday, August 5, as part of its negotiations with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), led by Abdullah Öcalan, who has been imprisoned on İmralı Island since 1999. The 12-article arrangement, known publicly as the “framework law,” was taken up by the Justice Committee on Friday and will be on the floor of the General Assembly on Sunday.

The bill essentially provides for the deferral of the prison sentences of PKK guerrillas, and of those alleged to be members, in exchange for the liquidation of the party and its armed wing. Riddled with legal loopholes, it leaves a substantial section of the party's members—including Öcalan among them—outside its scope and makes the fate of those who do come within it entirely dependent on Ankara's word. This measure is not only far from being a general political amnesty; it does not even amount to an amnesty for the PKK members.

The product of secret diplomacy between the Erdoğan government, the Kurdish nationalist Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) and Öcalan, the measure confirms what the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained from the outset: The negotiations have nothing to do with “democratization” or “peace” or with the recognition of the basic rights of the Kurdish people.

The talks have developed directly as a component of US imperialism's growing aggression in the Middle East and its drive for total domination of the region. Against the background of Israel's launching of the Gaza genocide with US-NATO backing in October 2023, the overthrow of the Bashar Assad regime in Syria and US-Israeli war preparations against Iran, the negotiations began with the aim of bringing the interests of the Turkish and Kurdish ruling elites into alignment. Locked in intensifying rivalry with Israel in Syria and across the wider region, Ankara is seeking, with Öcalan's help, to convert the PKK-led Kurdish movement from a 40-year enemy into an ally and so strengthen its own hand.

Erdoğan and Öcalan are advancing a reactionary “Turkish, Kurdish, Arab” alliance, aligned with Washington's aims, against Israel's growing influence in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and across the Middle East. Washington views and backs the

Ankara-PKK agreement as a consolidation of the anti-Iran axis, following the forcible subordination of the Kurdish-nationalist Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to the new Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) regime in Damascus. This agreement between Turkish and Kurdish nationalists, both accomplices of US imperialism, is aimed not at preparing for peace but for war.

On October 22, 2024, Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and Erdoğan's de facto coalition partner, called on Öcalan to come to parliament and declare the PKK dissolved. In the negotiating process that followed, Öcalan issued this call on February 27, 2025; the PKK dissolved itself at its 12th Congress in May 2025 and staged a symbolic weapons-burning ceremony in Sulaymaniyah, in Iraqi Kurdistan, in July. The parliamentary commission set up in August 2025 went to İmralı in November to meet Öcalan and adopted its joint report in February 2026.

The new bill was submitted with the signatures of 358 deputies. Alongside the near-unanimous backing of the deputies of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the MHP, a significant number of DEM Party deputies also signed it.

Its implementation will remain entirely in the government's hands. Only after the security agencies have established that the PKK and “all associated groups” have ended their existence and surrendered their weapons, and this finding has been confirmed by the National Security Council (MGK), and the confirmation has been published in the *Official Gazette*, will those wishing to benefit from the law have six months in which to apply. Implementation will be directed by an eight-member board chaired by the vice president and including the head of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and the secretary general of the MGK—a body entirely beyond parliamentary oversight. The MGK stands at the head of the state's security apparatus. That the fate of a process that claims to bring democratization is made to hang on an MGK decision exposes the real character of it.

Under the law, investigations, prosecutions and the execution of sentences for the offences of membership of the PKK, being in the leadership, aiding and abetting, propaganda and the financing of terrorism will be deferred for five or 10 years. If

this period passes without a new “terrorist offence” being committed, the sentence will be deemed to have been served. Those who benefit, however, will remain politically bound hand and foot. Those granted a five-year deferral will be able to apply to a court after two years, and those granted 10 years after three years—and then only if the board sees fit—in order to recover their basic political rights.

Existing laws and regulations permit even activities that fall within the constitutional rights to freedom of expression and political activity to be treated as “terrorist offences.” Under conditions in which elected politicians of the Kurdish movement and countless leftists are held in prison in defiance of the constitution and of rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and in which the judiciary is wielded as a weapon against the main parliamentary opposition, the Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP), and now against the New Party, the question of whether a “terrorist offence” has been committed becomes an instrument in the government’s hands. In other words, PKK members who have surrendered at the end of a civil war that has cost tens of thousands of lives since 1984, without a single legal step having been taken on the Kurdish question, will live under a sword of Damocles.

A political amnesty—the release of all political prisoners, a basic democratic demand—is not even under discussion. Moreover, the law will not be applied equally even among PKK members. By excluding offences committed before June 1, 2005 that “carry a life sentence,” the PKK’s leadership, including Öcalan, are kept outside its scope.

In the negotiations the PKK advanced Öcalan’s freedom as a fundamental condition, and MHP leader Bahçeli repeatedly called for Öcalan to be granted the “right to hope.” This “right to hope” refers to the possibility of a prisoner’s “conditional release for good conduct within periods established by law.” In 2014, the ECHR ruled against Türkiye, finding that Öcalan’s sentence of aggravated life imprisonment without any possibility of parole breached the European Convention on Human Rights on the basis of the “right to hope.” According to press reports, Justice Minister Akın Gürlek stated explicitly, in a presentation to the AKP leadership, that neither Öcalan nor Selahattin Demirtaş would benefit from the measure. Demirtaş, former co-chair of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP)—which later became the DEM Party—has been in prison since 2016.

This capitulation will resolve none of the basic democratic questions. Workers and young people must demand the unconditional release of all political prisoners, the dropping of political prosecutions, the withdrawal of the trustees imposed on elected municipalities, the abolition of the Anti-Terror Law and constitutional guarantees for the Kurdish-language and mother-tongue education in state schools.

DEM Party Co-Chair Tuncer Bakırhan declared that, for all its shortcomings, the bill was “a signature placed under peace, democracy and our common future.” This rhetoric of

“democratization” and “peace” stands in total contradiction to the escalating state repression and the destruction of what remains of democratic rights. Hundreds were arbitrarily detained ahead of July’s NATO summit, and dozens are still being held. While many politicians of the Kurdish movement, among them Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, co-chair of the HDP, remain in prison, İstanbul Metropolitan Mayor and presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu has been jailed since March 2025. More than 30 CHP mayors have been thrown into prison, the CHP leadership was removed by a lawless court ruling, and Özgür Özel was forced to found the New Party. Özel criticized the procedure surrounding the bill but stressed that the party would continue to support the process, as it had done in the commission.

Under conditions in which NATO’s war against Russia in Ukraine and the US-Israeli war against Iran are escalating and Ankara is being ever more deeply drawn into them, in which Erdoğan has eliminated his principal electoral rivals by means of a judicial coup, and in which a relentless assault is being mounted on the social and democratic rights of the working class, the claim that this same government can bring democratization and peace underscores the bankruptcy of the nationalist perspective.

More fundamentally, as Leon Trotsky explained in *The Permanent Revolution*, in the epoch of imperialism the bourgeoisie of a country of belated capitalist development is organically incapable of resolving the basic democratic issues. The lasting solution of these issues, including securing the fundamental rights of the Kurdish people, requires the working class to take power as part of the struggle for international socialist revolution.

This requires building a united and revolutionary mass mobilization of the working class of all nationalities throughout the region against imperialism and its capitalist defenders, for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. That is the perspective for which the Sosyalist Eşitlik Partisi (Socialist Equality Party), the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, fights.



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