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Kurdistan

Dissolution of the PKK and new perspectives

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On February 2025, from the Turkish island of Imrali where he has been held in solitary confinement since 1999, Abdullah Öcalan, “Apo” (uncle) as he is affectionately known to the Kurds, called for the dissolution of the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK – Kurdistan Workers’ Party) and an end to the armed struggle in Turkey. The stunned reaction of some international opinion showed the extent to which the PKK's political evolution had been ignored.

The dissolution was therefore ratified at an extraordinary congress on May 12, held in two different locations (one can never be too careful...). This is the culmination of a 25-year quest for a political solution to the Kurdish question.

A decades-long struggle against oppression

At the time of the PKK's creation in 1984, the population of the Kurdish regions was living under the yoke of Turkish nationalism, and enduring constant repression in their political and daily lives: forbidden to speak their mother tongue, to stand for election as a Kurdish party... The list of prohibitions was long. For example, in 1991, Leyla Zana, a member of the Turkish Parliament, uttered the following sentence in Kurdish: “Long live peace between the Turkish people and the Kurdish people! This earned her 15 years in prison and torture. The only remaining political expression was therefore armed struggle.

By the mid-1990s, the PKK was already looking for an alternative to armed struggle. At his trial in 1999, Abdullah Öcalan reaffirmed his commitment to a federal solution with equal rights for all. Numerous attempts were made by the PKK to initiate dialogue with the Turkish government, including with the peace activists who came down from the mountains, but the wall of Turkish nationalism remained immovable, and Kurdish parties were systematically dissolved: HEP, DEP, HADEP... Here too, the list is long.

Openness and the Arab Spring

When Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan first came to power, an opening seemed possible, with the start of negotiations, but this was cut short by the Arab revolution of 2011. The Turkish president saw an opportunity to regain a dominant role in the Middle East and stopped the negotiations. Meanwhile, in Rojava, north-eastern Syria, a laboratory of PKK ideas was being organized, an autonomous region that advocated equality between men and women, with fighters descending from the Qandil mountain and rescuing Yezidis, defending Kobane while forming an alliance with Arab tribes to form the FDS (Syrian Democratic Forces). Rojava's existence seemed to be hanging by a thread since Turkey's invasion of Afrin in the north-west, and then of Serekanye, Turkey's stranglehold on the water of the Euphrates. The jihadist offensive that toppled Assad changed all that.

Turkey was counting on its ANS mercenaries to overcome Rojava, the FDS held out, The new Syrian leader Ahmed Al-Shaara no longer had an army since Israel shelled all his military bases, his only concern was the lifting of sanctions. The US has done so, and Europe will probably follow suit. Turkey has ceased its intensive bombardment of Rojava and northern Iraq, and is now developing a new oil and gas route through Iraqi Kurdistan, as an alternative to the Russian-Chinese route.

Will the economic stakes be enough to secure an acceptable political settlement to the Kurdish question? The ball is in Ankara's court, as it has still not released a single one of the 12,000 political prisoners it is holding, a prerequisite for serious negotiations.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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