

TIMELINE:  
KURDISH  
RESISTANCE



in

TURKEY AND SYRIA  
1847-2019

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# Timeline: Kurdish Resistance in Turkey & Syria 1847 - 2019

## Introduction

The American news media, over the last couple decades, typically shows a very dualistic image of the Kurdish people. They are either ruthless fighters (whether US allies or “terrorists”), or victims of brutal genocide (at the hand of Saddam Hussein, in 1988). It takes some digging beyond recent journalism to unearth the story of the Kurds, since history is sadly often written by the colonizer rather than the colonized.

I wanted to excavate the ingredients to the Kurds’ hard-earned autonomy in Northern Syria--a feminist, radically democratic autonomy, enmeshed with Syria’s ongoing proxy wars while resisting fascism just a few miles to the North in Turkey. Many of the events that seemed most pivotal to Kurdish resistance in Turkey and the development of Rojava (NES) in Syria did not fit the fighter/victim binary of the Kurds shown in Western media; and they bore very little resemblance to the glorious leftist fantasy of a militant Vanguard party.

Most of the events on this timeline are centered around local & parliamentary elections, alternative (Kurdish language) media and publishing, and ordinary people organizing and engaging in civil disobedience. For decades, ordinary people resisted homogenization into the dominant culture of the nation-state, while forcing a series of tipping points. It certainly didn’t hurt to be allied with the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK),\* but the importance of a broad popular base engaged in activism and electoral politics must be highlighted.

It became clear, as I researched, that radical democracy and mass engagement in the political process were values close to the heart of Kurdish life in Turkey long before the inception of Rojava. The legacy of the pro-Kurdish left in Syria and Turkey is one refreshingly uninhibited by sectarianism, and unhindered by the false dichotomy of reform versus revolution.

\*The PKK is a militant, pro-Kurdish party that evolved away from nationalism/separatism in the Nineties, eventually embracing Democratic Confederalism, an eco-socialist, feminist, democratic political program.

# How to use this timeline

There are three intertwining color-coded timelines:

**Kurdistan & Statelessness (1847-1988)**

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**Political Development of the Kurdish Left in Turkey (1938-2019)**

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**Kurdish Autonomy in Northern Syria (1980-2019)**

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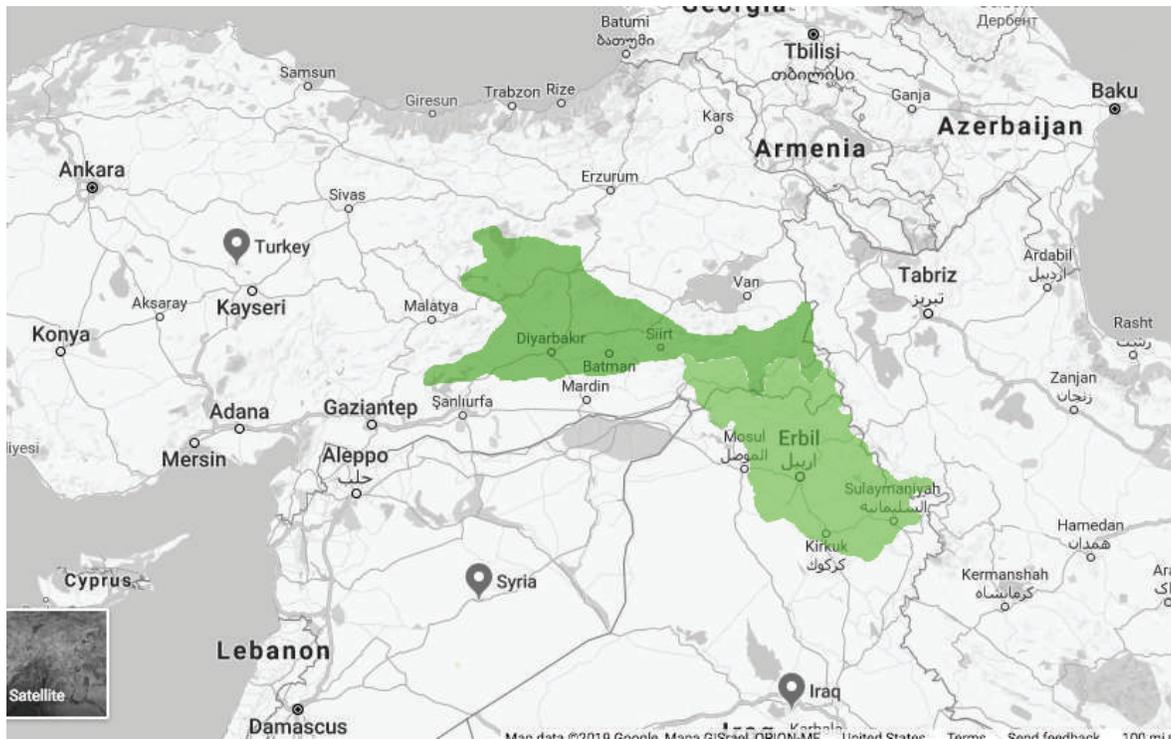


Some events will connect to more than one timeline. Each timeline runs parallel to the others, and each page covers a varying span of time. Each page reads left to right, chronologically.

The timelines are limited to Kurdistan, Turkey, and Syria as the region is quite geopolitically complex, and these three overlapping areas have an interesting, ongoing decolonial relationship. My objective is to provide a visual juxtaposition of the Kurds with the nation-state. Imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan asserts that the very concept of the nation-state is fascistic in nature. Fascism seems to be most difficult to diagnose when it is current, and you are living under it. My hope is that this visualization of the long view helps construct a framework for naming and understanding fascism, in its various phases and disguises. In addition, I hope to show the connected strategies used by pro-Kurdish activists, militants, and politicians over several decades. There is much to learn from a non-sectarian, internationalist approach to anti-fascist work.

# Geography

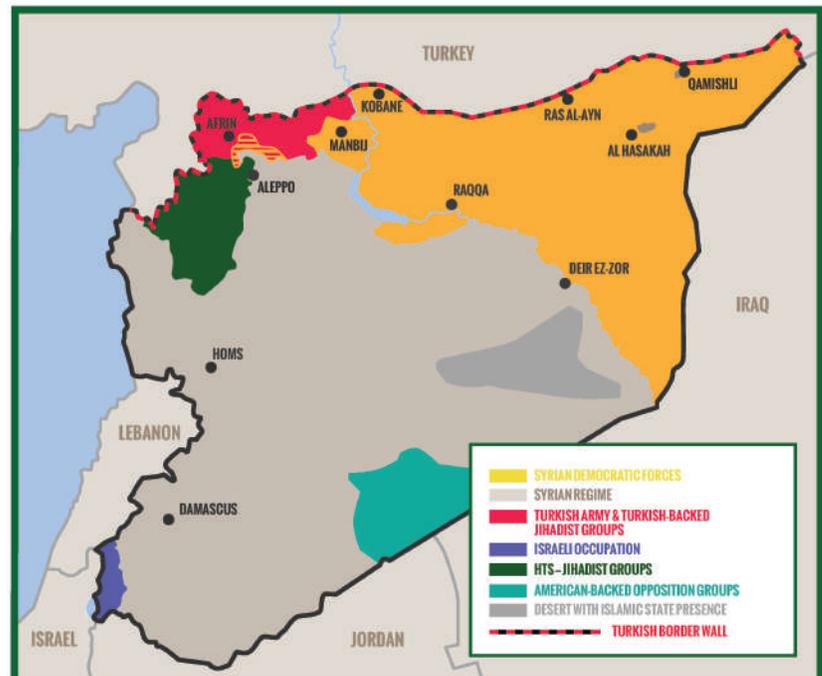
## 1920: Treaty of Sèvres



The green shaded region is an estimation of the short-lived autonomous Kurdistan, formed by the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. It's overlaid on a current map, at the intersection of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Kurdish territory was considerably larger than this prior to WWI.

## May 2019: Rojava

This 2019 map of Syria shows the various areas of control in Syria. The yellow area represents Rojava (NES) control. It also shows that Afrin, to the northwest, is currently occupied by Turkish military and Turkish-backed jihadis.



Map produced by Rojava Information Center, May 2019

# Key Terms

## **PKK**

Abbreviation for the Kurdistan Worker's Party. The PKK is a militant, pro-Kurdish party that evolved away from nationalism/separatism in the Nineties, eventually embracing Democratic Confederalism, an eco-socialist, feminist, democratic political program. Abdullah Öcalan and other Kurdish activists started the PKK during the 1970s with the goal of Kurdish independence.

## **Kurdistan**

Kurdistan is the region spanning Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria where the Kurdish people have lived for hundreds of years.

## **YPG**

YPG is the acronym for the People's Protection Units. The YPG is a defense force that formed following violence against Kurds at a soccer match in Qamishlo, Northern Syria. The YPG is central to the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) and serves as the defense force for Rojava.

## **YPJ**

YPJ is the acronym for the Women's Protection Units. The YPJ is the women-only version of the YPG, and functions alongside it. The YPJ played a crucial role in defeating Daesh (ISIS).

## **Democratic Confederalism**

Democratic Confederalism is an egalitarian form of government that draws upon Social Ecology and Libertarian Municipalism, concentrating power at the most local level (the "commune," or a group of families/homes). A network of elected administrative councils links communities together and allows citizens to manage the affairs of their neighborhood with a high degree of autonomy.

## **Social Ecology**

Social Ecology is a theory developed by Murray Bookchin. He describes it as an appeal for social reconstruction upon ecological lines, and argues that the domination of human by human is linked to our domination, and degradation, of nature. Social Ecology explores the way in which environmental problems are rooted in social problems.

# Key Terms (continued)

## **Jineologi**

Also spelled “Jineology,” this is a social science similar to Women’s Studies, and a form of feminism taught and advocated in Rojava. It draws heavily upon the anthropology of the Middle East to understand the last few thousand years of patriarchy and womanhood. It translates as “women’s science.”

## **Rojava**

Popularly known as Rojava, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES) is made up of several self-governing regions: Afrin, Jazeera (also called Cizre), Raqqa, Tabqa, Deir al-Zour, Manbij, and Euphrates. Though it began as a mostly-Kurdish autonomous zone in a region left vacant during the Syrian Civil War, Rojava is now a pluralistic society comprised of many ethnic groups. Rojava’s three core principles are: ecology, grassroots democracy, and feminism. The word Rojava means “West,” as in Western Kurdistan.

## **AKP**

AKP is the abbreviation for Turkey’s Justice and Development Party, founded by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2001. The far-right party aims to preserve Turkey’s Ottoman history and Islamic identity.

## **PYD**

The PYD (Democratic Union Party) is a Kurdish Democratic Confederalist political party operating in Northern Syria. It is the Syrian branch of the PKK and was vital to the development of Rojava.

## **SDF**

The SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) is a coalition of Turkmen, Arab, and Assyrian militias led by the YPG.

# Timeline: Kurdish Resistance in Turkey & Syria

1847 - present



## 1916 – Sykes-Picot Agreement

A secret agreement between French diplomat François Georges-Picot and British officer Mark Sykes, near WWI's end, splits the soon-to-be-conquered Ottoman Empire between France and Britain.

## Kurdistan

& Statelessness  
1847-1988

1847

### 1847-1880

The Kurds—some of Mesopotamia's earliest inhabitants—are ruled by the Ottoman Empire. 30,000 die during Kurdish uprisings against Ottoman oppression.

### 1916-1918

Mass ethnic cleansing and displacement of the Kurds happens at the hands of the "Young Turks." 35%-50% die, 700,000 are deported.

### October 30, 1918 - The Armistice of Mudros

The Ottoman Empire is defeated by Great Britain in WWI, during the Armistice of Mudros.

1918



## July 24, 1923 – Treaty of Lausanne

The Allies sign the Treaty of Lausanne, amending The Treaty of Sèvres. A sovereign Kurdistan is off the table, Turkey is formed, and northern borders of Syria and Iraq are set. This satisfies Turkish nationalists who protested the previous notion of a Kurdish territory, and dashes hopes of Kurdish sovereignty.

# The Treaty of Sèvres

## August 10, 1920 - The Treaty of Sèvres

The lines drawn up by the Sykes-Picot Agreement are formalized. Dissolves the Ottoman Empire, & scales back Turkey's rights over regions in Asia and North Africa. Calls for several independent states to be formed, including an autonomous Kurdistan.

## November 3, 1918

Oil is discovered in the Kurdish province Mosul. Britain occupies the region.

Kurdistan

1918

## 1919

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk leads an uprising against proxies of the Allies in the Turkish War of Independence.

## November 3, 1918

Oil is discovered in the Kurdish province Mosul. Britain occupies the region.

## 1922

Ataturk's Turkish nationalist movement abolishes the Ottoman sultanate.

1923

## 1925-1927 - Sheikh Said and Sheikh Abdurrahman rebellions in Turkey

Sheikh Said and later, his brother Sheikh Abdurrahman incite the first large-scale Kurdish rebellions in Turkey, but are eventually suppressed by Turkish military.

**1924**

Sulaimaniya falls at the hands of British forces.

**1923**

A Kurdish kingdom, Sulaimaniya, is declared in northern Iraq by former Kurdish Governor, Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji in an uprising against the British.

# ARARAT

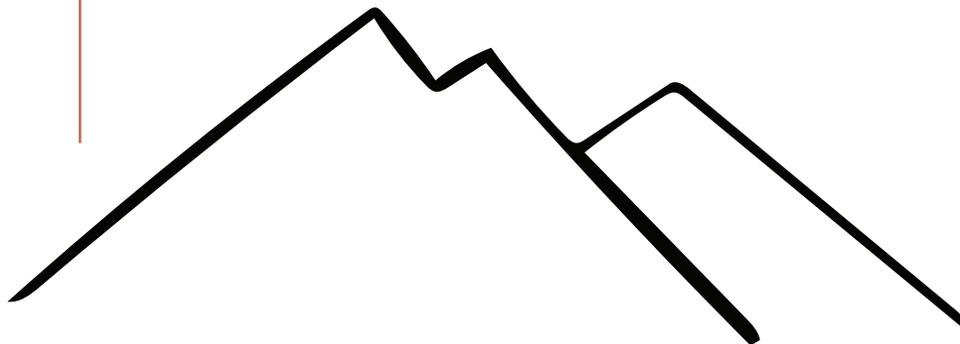
## 1927-1930 - Kurdish Republic of Ararat in Turkey

During a wave of Kurdish resistance in south-eastern Turkey, the Republic of Ararat declares independence. From 1930 to 1931, Turkish aerial bombardment brutally defeats Kurdish occupations.

Kurdistan

1923

1935



**October 29, 1923**

Ataturk proclaims Turkey a republic in Ankara, and becomes its first president. He enacts 65 anti-Kurdish laws. Kurds are renamed "Mountain Turks" and public use of their language is criminalized.

## 1938 - The Dersim Rebellion

The Kurds' fourth major uprising against Kemalist Turkey results in 7,954 deaths in less than a year. The rebellion's leader Seyit Riza is captured and hanged.

1938 - 2019:  
Political Development  
of the Kurdish Left in

# Turkey

1935

1950



## 1946

Iranian Kurds attempt to create a Kurdish government in Iran. This is swiftly suppressed by the Iranian government.

## 1945

Turkey joins the United Nations.

Kurdistan

1935

1950

## 1937 - Treaty of Saadabad

Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan consolidate their efforts against the Kurds in sign the Treaty of Saadabad.

## 1925-1938

1.5 million + Kurds are massacred or deported.

- MARTIAL LAW
- EPISTEMICIDE

## 1937-1950

Kurdish areas of Turkey are typically under martial law. Foreigners are banned from these areas in order to preserve Turkey's international reputation. Turkey performs mass epistemicide of Kurdish culture, literature, and history.



## 1959 - İleri Yurt

Kurdish newspaper İleri Yurt is launched by Kurdish intellectuals. Within the same year, the publication is banned, and fifty Kurdish intellectuals imprisoned (on the grounds of being communists).

Turkey

1950

1965

doğuculuk = eastism

### 1960s - "Eastism"

The intellectual heart of the PKK is birthed with the notion of Doğuculuk (Eastism). Doğuculuk articulates the Turkish government's neglect of Kurdish-majority eastern provinces, and refers to historical Kurdistan, which covers much of eastern Turkey and extends further east and south, across Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

Kurdistan

1950

1965

### 1961

The Turkish Labor Party (TİP) is founded. The TİP confronts issues of Kurdish alienation. Many Kurds become politically active within the party.

TIP TURKISH  
LABOR  
PARTY

### 1961

A rebellion is begun by Iraqi Kurds of the Kurdish Democratic Party, and quickly suppressed. The Kurdish Democratic Party is dissolved within two weeks.

**1952 – Turkey becomes a member of NATO.**

## 1971 – Dissolution of the DDKO

In a 1971 military coup, all DDKO leaders are arrested and the organization dissolved.

## 1970 – Öcalan in the DDKO

In Istanbul, activist Abdullah Öcalan (who will go on to found the PKK), participates in DDKO activities.

## 1969 – DDKO

The Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths (DDKO) is formed, in the spirit of Doğuculuk/Eastism.

Turkey

1965

1975

### August, 1967

TİP supports major Kurdish demonstrations against Ötüken's anti-Kurdish article. These are called "Rallies of the East." Kurdish consciousness is raised, and activism increases.

### April, 1967

In conservative, nationalist publication Ötüken, an anonymous writer suggests Kurds be removed from Turkey due to their rootlessness as people, and their desire to divide the country. Turkish President Cevdet Sunay declares, "those who are not Turks may go away from Turkey."

Kurdistan

1965

1975

### 1970s

Mass removal of Kurds from predominantly Kurdish areas; Kurds are suspected aiding Iran in Iran-Iraq War.

### 1970

Iraq agrees to grant Kurds autonomy in a peace agreement; Kurds are formally recognized as one of the two primary nationalities making up the Iraqi people.

## 1980s – late 1990s

Syria's Ba'ath (Assad) regime allows the PKK to train and maintain camps in Damascus and Lebanon, due to PKK's potential as a great ally against Turkey. Within the context of the Cold War, Syria is supported by the Soviet Union, and Turkey is a member of NATO; they are oppositional forces.



**August 15, 1984**

PKK begins a guerilla war, launching attacks against military bases in Turkey; thousands of Kurdish young people come from Syria to join the struggle. Within 5 years, the PKK grows to 10,000 members.

**1980**

Turkey's third coup since 1960 is backed by the US and forces most PKK leaders into hiding or out of the country. There are thousands of arrests.

1980-2019:  
Kurdish Autonomy  
in Northern  
**Syria**

1975

1985

**1973-1978**



Some former DDKO members form the Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) with Abdullah Öcalan in Ankara, with the goal of Kurdish independence.

**1978**

An ongoing conflict begins the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkish state. The anti-colonial PKK, led by Abdullah Öcalan, aims to liberate the Kurds and establish a socialist Kurdish state.

Turkey

1975

1985

**1980**

**TIP**  
**SHP**

A coup d'état ends the TIP, which had provided a political home for the Kurds. The Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) takes its place, and releases a report highlighting Turkish oppression of Kurds. This engenders the Kurds' political support.



**1988**

The PKK begins a Women's education project, synthesizing feminist ideas with Marxism; women battalions are created.

**1989**

The first PKK Women's school is launched, requiring a woman and a man to co-command regions, battalions, and other groups within the PKK (except for the role of President).

Syria

1985

1990



**1989**

The Kurdish language ban is annulled by Turkish government. Official use of Kurdish in publishing, teaching, or government remained criminalized. Kurdish language television programs begin to air at the suggestion of Turkish government.

**Spring, 1990 SHP → HEP**

Turkish leftists and Kurdish SHP members form the People's Labor Party (HEP).

**April, 1988**

SHP member of Parliament, Mehmet Ali Eren, proposes an amendment to overturn the ban on Kurdish language.



Turkey

1985

1990

**February-August, 1988**

**HUSSEIN**

Saddam Hussein uses chemical weapons in the genocide of some 100,000 Iraqi Kurds. This is called Operation Anfal, an attempt to suppress Kurdish unrest.



Kurdistan

1985

1990



ideological changes

1991 USSR

The Soviet Union falls. PKK decentralizes, removing much of its power from the Central Committee. Ideological changes begin to take place within PKK.

Syria

1990



1993 - The Union of Free Women of Kurdistan

PKK forms the Union of Free Women of Kurdistan (YAJK), and with this, principles of dual leadership, women's autonomy, and a rule of minimum 40% participation of women across all areas. (This rule later becomes central to Rojavan governing structures.)

1993

1993

TERRORIST  
PKK

Germany officially lists the PKK as a terrorist organization.

Turkey

1990

1990-1991 REST IN POWER VEDAT AYDIN

With the HEP's growing political influence in Turkey, violence between police and civilians increases in the Southeast. Vedat Aydın, a leader in the HEP, faces trial for delivering a public speech in Kurdish. After Aydın's abduction and brutal murder, police fire into the massive crowd at his funeral causing 14 civilian deaths, claiming attendants were throwing rocks.

Winter, 1991

The HEP gains influence, securing 22 parliamentary seats. Kurdish language is spoke in Turkish Parliament for the first time, disrupting the Turkish political world.

1991



1993

In an interview with a prominent Turkish journalist, PKK leader Öcalan states that the PKK has shifted from seeking Kurdish independence to acquiring political and human rights within Turkey. Younger, more radical Kurds enter the political landscape; the HEP refuses to condemn the PKK.

## 1993-1996

Mass demonstrations in solidarity with the Kurds and PKK become common in Europe.

### 1990-1999

Turkey threatens war and forces Syria to expel the PKK; this changes Syria's amiable relationship with the PKK. Turkey controls the majority of Syria's water sources (Syrian water flows primarily from high elevation areas in Turkey); this shifts the power out of Syrian hands. The PKK also loses Soviet support during this time. Abdullah Öcalan becomes displaced, seeking asylum in South Africa from Nelson Mandela.



1993

1994

### 1993-1997 →

1,310 Kurds are mysteriously killed. It is believed by many Kurds that this was the work of Islamic Turkish Hizbullah (Party of God) and the Gendarmerie Intelligence and Fight against Terrorism (JITEM), an anti-terror squad sponsored by the Turkish state.

### 1993 – Dissolution of HEP

Turkish government dismantles the HEP on claims of divisiveness, regionalism, & the creation of minorities. Individuals aren't banned for political engagement, but the party is institutionally dissolved. HEP keep parliamentary seats by forming a new party, the Democracy Party (DEP).

Turkey

1993

1994

### February, 1994 – Bombing of Tuzla train station

The PKK targets military cadets in a train station bombing. DEP officials are publicly supportive.



**15** YEARS | Orhan Doğan  
Selim Sadak  
Hatip Dicle  
Leyla Zana

### July 1994 – HADEP

The People's Democracy Party (HADEP) is formed by Murat Bozlak and receives massive Kurdish support.

### March-December, 1994

Turkish government repeals parliamentary immunity of 6 DEP members suspected of collaboration with the PKK. In the DEP Trials, Orhan Doğan, Selim Sadak, Hatip Dicle, and Layla Zana are sentenced to 15 years in prison.

**SYRIA </3 PKK**

**1995** ((( deportation )))

PKK loses Syrian support and all PKK leaders are deported.



**USA!**

**1997**

US State Department adds PKK to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

Syria

1995



**1998**

The PKK looks to Mexico's Zapatistas (EZLN) as a model for direct democracy and autonomy; the Zapatismo "revolution from below" ideology is discussed by party leadership at a two-day conference.

1998

Turkey

1995

**1996**

HADEP is suspected of collaboration with the PKK. Pro-PKK publications are found in the offices of HADEP members; some members & leaders are arrested.

1998

## February, 1999 – The Capture & Sentencing of Öcalan

- The Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) captures Öcalan in Nairobi, Kenya, with the help of international forces (namely, the CIA). Essa Moosa, Nelson Mandela's lawyer, convinced Mandela to offer Öcalan asylum; Öcalan is captured en route to South Africa.
- He is sentenced to death, which later becomes a life imprisonment sentence (as Turkey abolished the death penalty while seeking membership in the EU).
- Thousands of Kurdish activists are arrested. Militant Kurds enact a bombing campaign, which does not help HADEP's public image in the eyes of the Turkish state.

ÖCALAN is CAPTURED in NAIROBI

### 1999

HADEP's popular support increases as the Turkish state accuses them of supporting the PKK. Their critiques of Turkish government become more stringent, and their demands more radical.

Syria / Turkey

1999

2000

### February, 1999

Ceasefire between PKK and Turkish government begins.

### March, 1999

The Freedom for Öcalan campaign begins. The campaign eventually receives more than 10.3 million signatures, along with support from the likes of Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Jeremy Corbyn, and others.

FREEDOM FOR  
ÖCALAN

NOAM CHOMSKY  
ARUNDHATI ROY  
JEREMY CORBYN  
ETC.

NATIONALIST  
SEPARATISM  
↓  
democracy

### May 31, 1999 – Öcalan's Trial

Following some 100 days in solitary confinement, Öcalan's 9-day trial commences. When blamed for the deaths of 40,000 (mostly Kurds), Öcalan speaks remorsefully. He calls fallen Turkish soldiers "martyrs," and renounces his revolutionary stance. Öcalan claims he would play a crucial role in negotiating peace between the PKK and Turkish state, stating that he could persuade PKK forces to withdraw from their mountain strongholds in under 3 months. There is a clear shift from nationalist separatism to the struggle for a democratic Turkey. In typical Turkish fashion, the Kurdish Question is once again discarded. Öcalan becomes the sole prisoner at Imrali prison, commonly referred to as Europe's Guantanamo.

## 1999-2005 - Öcalan's Metamorphosis

While in prison, Öcalan undergoes a political transformation. He studies the works of Judith Butler, Murray Bookchin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Emma Goldman, and Benedict Anderson, among many others. Inspired by ancient Mesopotamia, cultural anthropology, and Sumerian mythology, he forms a pluralistic, feminist, libertarian socialist political program that he calls **Democratic Confederalism**. His prison writings critique the dogmatic, violent nationalist of his political past and the inflexibility of Marxist-Leninism.

BOOKCHIN

- + WALLERSTEIN
- + EMMA GOLDMAN
- + BENEDICT ANDERSON

feminism libertarian  
socialism

**DEMOCRATIC  
CONFEDERALISM!**

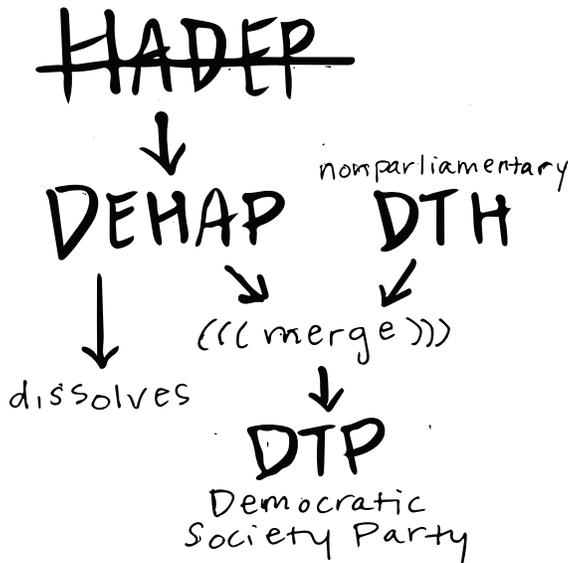


Syria

2000

2004

### 2002-2004 - DEHAP replaces HADEP & merges with DTH to become DTP



The Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) replaces HADEP, and popular support increases (6.2% of the national vote in 2002). In 2004, DEHAP merges with the Democratic Society Movement (DTH; a non-parliamentary project founded by former DEP members), and creates the Democratic Society Party (DTP). DEHAP is dissolved in the merge.

### 2003 - Turkey abolishes HADEP

Despite Kurds gaining some rights with the EU's involvement, Turkey abolishes HADEP on charges of aiding the PKK.

Turkey

2000

2004

TURKEY  
ENTERS

### 2002 - Turkey enters EU

EU

With Turkey's acceptance into the EU, reforms as passed that abolish the death penalty and improve the Kurds' civil status.

## 2004 – Qamishli

30 Kurds are killed during a riot at a soccer match in Qamishli, a city in northeastern Syria. Arab supporters of Saddam Hussein (who committed genocide against tens of thousands of Kurds in the late 1980s) raised pictures of Hussein at the match and Kurds retorted with Kurdish flags, leading to a skirmish. The rioters are met with military helicopters, tanks, and troops. Kurds destroy a statue of former Syrian President Hafez al-Asaad. The People's Protection Units (YPG, and later YPJ) form following these events, in response to the Syrian-Kurdish Left's apparent need for self-defense.



Syria

2004

### 2004 – Öcalan contacts Murray Bookchin

Öcalan has his lawyers contact social theorist Murray Bookchin, who is elderly and residing in Vermont. Öcalan says he is "eager to make the ideas applicable to Middle Eastern societies," referring to Bookchin's writings on Social Ecology and Libertarian Municipalism. Bookchin responds asking for patience, as he is ill.



2005

2005

The 1999 Ceasefire officially ends. The PKK adopts Democratic Confederalism as its primary form of decision-making.

Turkey

2004

2005

### 2004-2005 – DTP goals & development

Former DEP members Orhan Doğan, Selim Sadak, Hatip Dicle, and Layla Zana (who were jailed for PKK collaboration in 1994) set out to unify Kurdish political movements, outside the bureaucracy of Parliament. They create the DTH, which becomes the DTP in 2005. The DTP's goal is to redefine Turkish citizenship outside of ethnic lines, with the acceptance of a Kurdish political identity.

Syria

2006

2008

2006

Bookchin passes away before seeing the PKK implement his ideas.



**May, 2008**

European Parliament demands the DTP detach itself from the PKK, and insists the PKK disarm.

SOCIAL  
ECOLOGY

Turkey

2006

2008

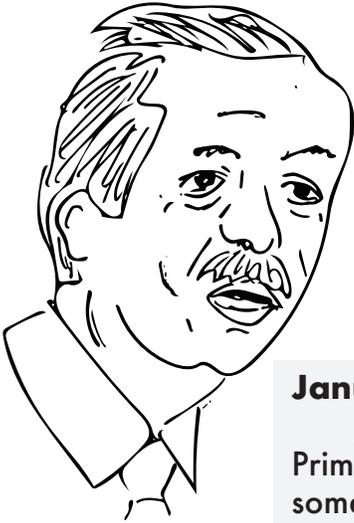
COUNTER  
TERRORISM

**October, 2008**

A PKK raid on a gendarmerie station with 15 casualties is used to justify Turkey's expanding "counterterrorism" campaign against Kurdish cultural organizations, unions, political parties, etc. A military summit is convened to coalesce Turkish defense forces against the PKK.

2006

The DTP collaborates with imprisoned Öcalan, via his lawyers, to run candidates electorally as independents, skirting past Parliament's bureaucratic constraints on smaller political parties. 20 DTP members enter Parliament. The DTP continues to publicly support the PKK.



# Erdoğan

**January, 2009**

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan competes with the DTP by offering Kurds some reforms through his ruling party, the AKP. Erdoğan speaks Kurdish on TV, at the inception of a new, 24-hour Kurdish language television station.

**February 24, 2009**

DTP chairman Ahmet Türk speaks Kurdish during a televised party session in parliament, citing Erdoğan's recent use of the language on television. The state-owned TV channel stops broadcasting, issuing a statement about the illegality of speaking a language other than Turkish in political party meetings.

Turkey

2009

2010

★KCK★

1,800 members of pro-Kurdish political parties are arrested.

**April, 2009**

The PKK's nonviolent sister organization, the Union of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), was formed in 2007 and operated at the city level since. Kurds are increasingly active in this and other political organizations. In April, 2009, most of the 1,800 Kurdish members of political parties (like the DTP) are arrested.

~~DTP~~

BANNED



BDP

Peace + Democracy Party

**December, 2009**

The DTP is banned for threatening the 'unified' Turkish state, and its leaders Ahmet Türk and Aysel Tuğluk are banned from political activity for 5 years. Former DTP members join the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), claiming 20 seats in Parliament and 98 municipalities throughout Turkey.

## 2011 – Beginning of Syrian Civil War

A complex series of proxy wars breaks out in Syria. Turkey becomes a refuge and training ground for jihadists fighting in Syria. In hopes of installing an Islamist government friendly to Turkish interests, Turkey supports rebels hostile to the Kurds, allowing them passage into Syria.



Syria

2010

2011

# BDP

- 4 DEMANDS
- CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

### March, 2011

The BDP submits four demands to the Turkish government: 1. Right to education in the Kurdish language, 2. Freedom for political prisoners, 3. An end to military operations, and 4. Abolish the 10% election threshold, which blocked smaller pro-Kurdish parties from parliamentary participation. A civil disobedience campaign is threatened, if the government does not respond to these demands. Also around this time, Erdoğan openly accuses the BDP of acting in collaboration with the PKK.

Turkey

2010

2011

### September, 2010

PKK de facto leader Murat Kayayılan accepts the European Parliament's 2008 stance on disarming, and states in an interview that if local autonomy is granted to the Kurds, the PKK would surrender arms to the UN.

**PKK:**  
LOCAL AUTONOMY  
in exchange for  
DISARMING

### December, 2010 – Democratic Society Congress (DTK)

BDP members, along with other pro-Kurdish groups, join together at the Democratic Society Congress (DTK). The congress publishes "Turkey's democratization process, and a solution with regard to the Kurdish Question Stance Document," a document calling for regional government, an official language, and freedom of expression.

BLOCKED:

- Leyla Zana
- Hatip Dicle
- Gültan Kişanak
- Sabahat Tuncel
- + others

**April 18, 2011**

Twelve independent candidates—Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Gültan Kişanak, Sabahat Tuncel, and others—are blocked from elections by the Turkish High Election Authority (YSK). BDP supporters turn to civil disobedience, which culminates in clashes with police. By April 21, the YSK removes the ban.

**June 2011**

BDP's influence grows as they claim 36 of 550 seats in Parliament, and 6.58% of the total vote.

Turkey

2011

2012

BDP  
BOYCOTS  
PARLIAMENT

**June 23, 2011**

The BDP's Hatip Dicle and several others are disqualified after being elected, on the basis of previous arrests and so-called terrorist activities. The BDP declares a boycott of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Parliament).

**July 14, 2011**

The Democratic Society Congress (DTK) declares "democratic autonomy" in Diyarbakır, a large city in southeastern Turkey. They highlight Turkey's 1921 constitution (prior to The Treaty of Lausanne) as the nation's most democratic constitution. They openly call for recognition of Kurdish identity, and for better treatment of Abdullah Öcalan. Erdoğan states that he will never accept the region's autonomy.

## 2012

Syrian troops are relocated from Northern Syria to other, more strategic locations. Taking advantage of the vacuum left by the Syrian military, PKK's Syrian affiliate (the PYD) and other leftist groups form The Movement for a Democratic Society (or TEV-DEM) and begin building a progressive libertarian administrative structure for the autonomous region at the northern border.

### August 2012

The Rojava Republic is officially declared in Northern Syria by the PYD and the Kurdish National Council (KNC). The YPG and its women-only counterpart, the YPJ (Women's Protection Units) operate as Rojava's defense forces.



Syria

## 2012

### 2013

Attempts to occupy the Rojava Republic by Syrian military and rebel groups are thwarted by the YPG/YPJ. Rojavan principles begin to institutionalize.

## 2013

### 2013

Janet Biehl, long-time partner of the late Murray Bookchin, translates and publishes the first book-length study on Kurdish Democratic Confederation, titled *Democratic Autonomy in North Kurdistan: The Council Movement, Gender Liberation, and Ecology*. She observes that the Kurds' democratic confederalist praxis closely followed Bookchin's writings.



GOOGLE JANET BIEHL

THE DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION  
OF NORTHERN SYRIA

## January 2014

The autonomous region in Northern Syria known popularly as Rojava (the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria/DFNS, also known as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria/AANES) adopts an interim constitution. Three self-ruling regions or cantons are established: Afrin, Jazira, and Euphrates (called Kobanî at the time).

☆ AFRIN  
☆ JAZIRA  
☆ KOBANÎ  
(now called  
"Euphrates")

Syria

2013

2014

## January 2014 – The Social Contract

Fifty political parties and organizations draft a social contract to govern the cantons within Rojava. The document is a compromise between the groups, who all agreed against the formation of nation-state, against centralization, and in favor of gender equality and democracy. The contract states in its first sentence: "We, the people of the Democratic Autonomous Regions of Afrin, Jazira, and Kobane, a confederation of Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Aramaeans, Turkmens, Armenians and Chechens, freely and solemnly declare and establish this Charter, which has been drafted according to the principles of Democratic Autonomy." It emphasizes the regions' multicultural and religious plurality, and sets aside rights for youth, women, workers, and even the environment. Articles 30 and 34 detail rights to "work, social security, health, adequate housing" and to striking. Article 37 states that everyone has the right to seek political asylum, and Article 42 guarantees labor rights and sustainable development.

# ROJAVA'S

## SOCIAL CONTRACT

- MULTI-CULTURAL & RELIGIOUS PLURALITY
- WORKERS' RIGHTS
- GENDER EQUALITY
- ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS
- YOUTH RIGHTS
- RIGHTS TO HOUSING, HEALTH, SOCIAL SECURITY
- RIGHT TO SEEK POLITICAL ASYLUM etc.

## August 2014

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is elected president of Turkey. ISIS siege of the Rojavan canton Kobanî begins; the YPG/YPJ defend it.



## THE SIEGE OF KOBANÎ

### October 2014

Iraqi Peshmerga and Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters receive passage through Turkey to support the defense of Kobanî. Anarchists from Turkey and around the world join the YPG/YPJ in the fight against ISIS.



Syria / Turkey

2014

### September 2014

US backs YPG/YPJ in air strikes against ISIS in Kobanî and surrounding region. 45,000 refugees flow from Northern Syria into Turkey. Turkish forces use tear gas and water cannons to clear thousands from the border (including international press), as Kurds attempt to gain passage into Syria to provide aid and support the defense of Kobanî. Turkey claims they were blocking Kurdish militants from crossing the border.

2015

### January 2015

US forces announce that Kobanî, the Kobanî canton's capital city, is cleared of ISIL militants. ISIS admits defeat soon after.

2015

2016

**June 2015 – Kobani Massacre**

Around 164 people are killed and 200 injured when ISIS militants bomb and open fire on civilians. Syrians claim the militants entered through Turkey.



YPG  
YPJ +  
TURKMEN,  
ARAB, +  
ASSYRIAN  
MILITIAS

**November 2015 – Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**

YPG & YPJ unite against ISIS with other Turkmen, Arab, and Assyrian militias as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Over 200 villages and towns are liberated from ISIS control within the first month.

2015

2016

**March 2015**

By this time, YPG/YPJ, accompanied by FSA and US coalition air strikes, has liberated most villages in the Kobani canton that were lost to ISIL in the initial attacks.

**KOBANI<sup>↑</sup>  
IS  
LIBERATED!**

2016

2018

**February 2016**

Turkey begins shelling North Eastern Syria across the southern Turkish border.

**TURKEY ATTACKS  
AFRIN  
canton**

**January 2018**

Turkey begins attacks on the Rojavan canton of Afrin; some argue these attacks from Turkey and Turkey-backed rebels began as far back as 2016. Significant cultural sites including Kurdish and Yazidi cemeteries are destroyed; objects of cultural significance are stolen and sold in Turkey.

**Spring 2017**

**JINWAR** 

WOMEN'S VILLAGE

"JIN": woman, life

"WAR": space, land, home

Construction for the women's village, Jinwar, begins. Jinwar is a community for women (and their children) who want to grow in their personal autonomy and further reject patriarchy (specifically patriarchal family structures). By the end of 2018, Jinwar housed a women's academy (where Jineologi, the Kurdish version of women's studies, is taught), a bakery, 30 homes, a school system, and a communal gardening project.

**2016-2017**

Major cities Raqqa, Manbij, and Tabqa are liberated from ISIS by the SDF, with US support.

  
RAQQA  
MANBIJ  
TABQA  
**LIBERATED!**

Syria

2016

2018

**THE DEMOCRATIC  
FEDERATION  
OF NORTHERN SYRIA**

2016

The Democratic Federation of Rojava undergoes one of its several name changes. In 2016, Rojava officially becomes the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS), and in 2018 is again renamed the Autonomous Administration of North Eastern Syria (AANES).

2018

2019

**March 2018 – Present - Turkish Occupation of Afrin Canton**

Turkish and Turkish-backed forces occupy Afrin. Any civilians refusing to evacuate are forced to convert to Islam. Civilians, including children, are tortured or killed indiscriminately. The region is ecologically and culturally devastated.

TURKEY OCCUPIES Afrin



**November 8, 2018**

Leyla Güven, co-chair of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Congress (DTK) and member of the Turkish Parliament, begins a hunger strike for the release of Öcalan. Accused of being a member of the PKK, Güven was jailed in January 2018 following her opposition to the Turkish attack on Afrin. She describes the solitary confinement of Öcalan as “an obstacle on the path to permanent social peace.”

HDP · DTK

Syria

2018

**November 2018**

2019

US offers \$12 million reward for information on 3 senior PKK leaders.

**September 2018**

The General Council of the Self Administration in Northern and Eastern Syria is established, joining the existing cantons of Rojava with civil councils in Raqqa, Manbij, Tabqa and Deir al-Zor.

AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION of NORTH AND EAST SYRIA (OR: NES)



**January 2019**

President Trump declares US troops will leave Syria, incorrectly stating that complete victory over ISIS had been won. He later acquiesces to allies and military officials who argue that a complete withdrawal would leave key areas—including the Kurds—vulnerable to ISIS. A plan for a gradual reduction of troops is conceived instead.

2019

2019



**January 25, 2019**

Leyla Güven is released from prison and continues hunger strike. She strikes for 100+ days, and refuses medical treatment despite her critical condition.

LONG LIVE THE  
RESISTANCE OF  
LEYLA GÜVEN.

FREEDOM FOR  
**ÖCALAN**

**January 2019**

Öcalan is allowed to receive his first visit in two years, from his brother Mehmet. Öcalan has not been able to meet with his lawyers since 2011.

2019

March 2019



**March 2019**

An SDF spokesperson announces full territorial defeat of ISIS caliphate. President Trump attributes this success entirely to the US, as the SDF receives US support.

2019

2019

the AKP's  
25-year  
Rule  
IN ISTANBUL  
ENDS.

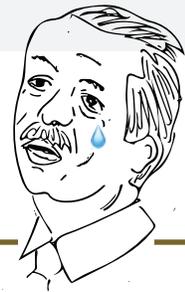
June 24, 2019



August 2019

Turkish government removes pro-Kurdish mayors on accusations of working with the PKK; more than 400 are arrested.

President Erdoğan's AK Party loses a re-election, after requiring residents of Istanbul to vote a second time (due to supposed voting irregularities). They vote the same as the first time, and opposition candidate Ekrem Imamoglu of the Republican People's Party becomes the new mayor. The election do-over was called after the AKP initially lost the election in March. AKP's 25-year rule in Istanbul (Erdoğan's home city) ends.



2019

2019

May 2019

Öcalan, from prison, calls off the hunger strike for his release. Leyla Güven and other pro-Kurdish activists end the strike.



ÖCALAN:  
NO MORE  
hunger  
Strike

# Addendum

October 9, 2019

Today Turkey and their Jihadist mercenaries invaded North & East Syria. Prisons where the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) holds ISIS prisoners were compromised. Civilians were injured and killed. Many are fleeing, attempting to escape en masse on congested roads.<sup>1</sup>

This attack was made possible when President Trump ordered US troops away from Northern Syria days ago, following a phone call with Erdogan. Erdogan explicitly stated his intentions of attacking and occupying Rojava, spanning North and East Syria. He claims Turkish military is targeting ISIS terrorists. He says they will “correct” the “demographics” that were unnaturally altered by the Kurds (plus Assyrians, Arabs, Yezidis, Christians, and others) settling in the region.<sup>2</sup> In America, we call that a dog whistle. Erdogan and other Turkish far-right Turkish nationalists are famously racist against the Kurds; you may have picked up on this reading through the timeline.

President Trump is a landlord. He has two Trump towers in Turkey, one residential, the other for offices. From *Mother Jones*:

Trump doesn't own the buildings—the situation might be less complicated if he did. Instead, Trump licenses his brand to the building's actual owner, Turkish business magnate Aydin Dogan, who has been described as the single largest payer of taxes in Turkey. He's a one-time antagonist of Erdogan who is now in step with the strongman.<sup>3</sup>

With impeachment looming, Trump seems desperate to endear himself to other far-right international figures, and to distract from impeachment for the sake of his re-election. In doing so, he gave the greenlight for Turkey—a NATO ally—to commit a massive genocide. The Twitter hashtags are currently #KurdsBetrayedbyTrump and #TrumpGenocide.

A comrade providing OSINT (Open-Source Intelligence) on NE Syria told me the following, when I asked for their message to Westerners: “People should know that all bloodshed is directly caused by the betrayal of Donald Trump. He could have stopped things, but he does not care or understand the situation and is a spineless coward.”

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2019/10/09/clarissa-ward-fleeing-syria-residents-vpx.cnn>

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/ragipsoylu/status/1181126803517247489>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2019/10/reminder-trump-has-a-massive-conflict-of-interest-in-turkey/>

[That comrade asked that I link to **Heyva Sor**, a humanitarian organization on the ground that provides medical care. Donate at: <http://www.heyvasor.com/en/alikari/>]

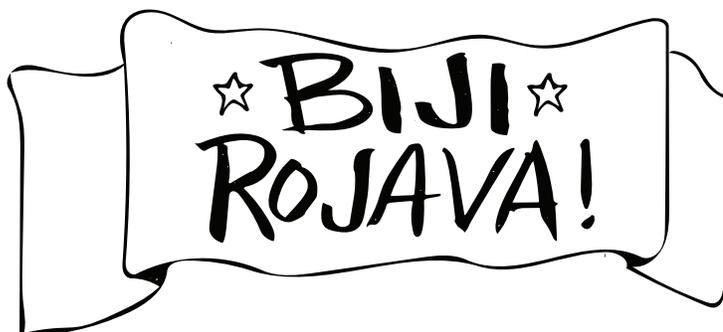
In America, we are currently demanding that the US rejoin Coalition forces to protect populations in NE Syria from genocide. We are demanding that the US enforce a No Fly Zone over Rojava.

As reports of ongoing attacks roll in, so do beautiful displays of solidarity across the world. Everyone from Republican Senator Marco Rubio to Cher have voiced their solidarity.<sup>4</sup> On the ground in Syria, Mihraç Ural, commander of the Communist Syrian Resistance, tweeted hours ago: "You have not succeeded in forty years, and you will never succeed. You will not defeat the will of the Kurdish people. Now in Syria, in the face of patriots' resistance, you will be defeated."<sup>5</sup>

Whether endlessly and sneakily re-branding their political parties in Turkey, or fighting ISIS on the front lines, the Kurdish revolution continues to survive. The length of this timeline bears testament to the movement's endurance. I discovered the following quote in an article by sociologist and activist Dilar Dirik.<sup>6</sup> It's a message HDP co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ sent from prison in 2016:

Despite everything, they can't consume our hope, or break our resistance. Whether in prison or not, the HDP and us, we are still Turkey's only option for freedom and democracy. And that's why they are so afraid of us. Do not, not a single one of you, allow yourself to be demoralised, do not drop your guard, do not weaken your resistance. Do not forget that this hatred and aggression is rooted in fear. Love and courage will definitely win.<sup>7</sup>

Long live the Rojava Revolution.



<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/marcorubio>  
<https://twitter.com/cher/status/1181390838200492032>

<sup>5</sup> <https://twitter.com/mihracural4/status/1182026202564976641>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/erdogan-s-war-on-women/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hdp.org.tr/en/english/news/news-from-hdp/messages-from-our-co-chairs-and-mps/9200>

# Acknowledgments

The OSINT comrade I mentioned can be found here:

<https://www.patreon.com/definitelywoofers/posts>

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Grateful for these organizations, please check them out:

- Institute for Social Ecology (Twitter: @InstSocEcology)
- Cooperation Jackson (Twitter: @CooperationJXN)
- Symbiosis (Twitter: @symbiosisrev)
- DSA Libertarian Socialist Caucus (Twitter: @dsa\_lsc)
- Demand Utopia (Twitter: @DemandUtopia)
- Cambridge Social Ecology  
(Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Cambridge-Social-Ecology-356298144962954/>)
- Symbiotic Horizon (Twitter: @SymbioticHorizo)
- Revolutionary Left Radio (Twitter: @RevLeftRadio)

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