

FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN

The Kurdish question relates to Iraq, Iran, Syria and in particular Turkey and is one of the major unsolved problems of the Middle East. The conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish freedom movement continues to the present day. In this conflict, so far more than 40,000 lives have been lost. About 4,500 villages have been evacuated or burnt down, while millions of people have become refugees dispersed over different territories.

From the past experience of other conflicts we know that for a peace process to develop there is a need for strong personalities whose leadership can convince their communities to look for peaceful solutions. Nelson Mandela, Gerry Adams, José Ramos-Horta and Aung San Suu Kyi had and have the respect and confidence of their communities and so can convince them to work constructively.

Without doubt Abdullah Öcalan also falls into this category. It is due to him that in the past few years the focus of the Kurdish freedom movement has shifted decisively away from military to political solutions.

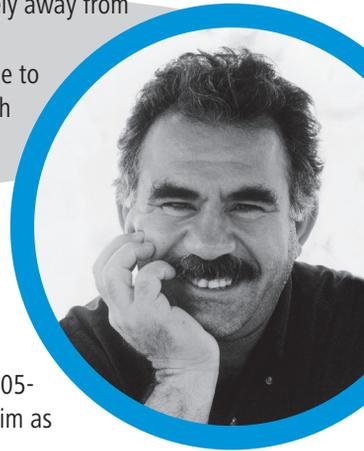
From 1993 onwards successive Turkish governments have from time to time approached Öcalan and thus recognized his key role in the search for a solution. The present Erdogan government maintained negotiations with him for two and a half years, during which time Öcalan proposed a step-by-step plan for achieving peace, from confidence-building measures, to the silencing of arms under international surveillance, to a permanent political solution to the Kurdish question. The negotiations broke off in July 2011, but Öcalan's proposals, laid out in his "Road Map," remain of the utmost importance.

What is more, the vast majority of Kurds rally behind Öcalan. In 2005-2006, 3.5 million Kurds signed a petition stating that they regarded him as their political representative.

As the one leader who possess the confidence of the Kurdish people, and as the progenitor of this peaceful solution, Öcalan is indispensable to resolving the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. But he cannot fulfill this his role from prison, due to the onerous conditions and the extremely restricted communication—he is at present entirely cut off from the outside world.

Öcalan's freedom is vital to break the military logic of the conflict and to shift the focus towards peaceful negotiations.

Therefore, we demand freedom for Abdullah Öcalan and the political prisoners in Turkey. Öcalan's freedom will mark a breakthrough for the democratization of Turkey and peace in Kurdistan.



Support the campaign at
www.freeocalan.org

International Initiative "Freedom for Abdulah Öcalan – Peace in Kurdistan", Cologne