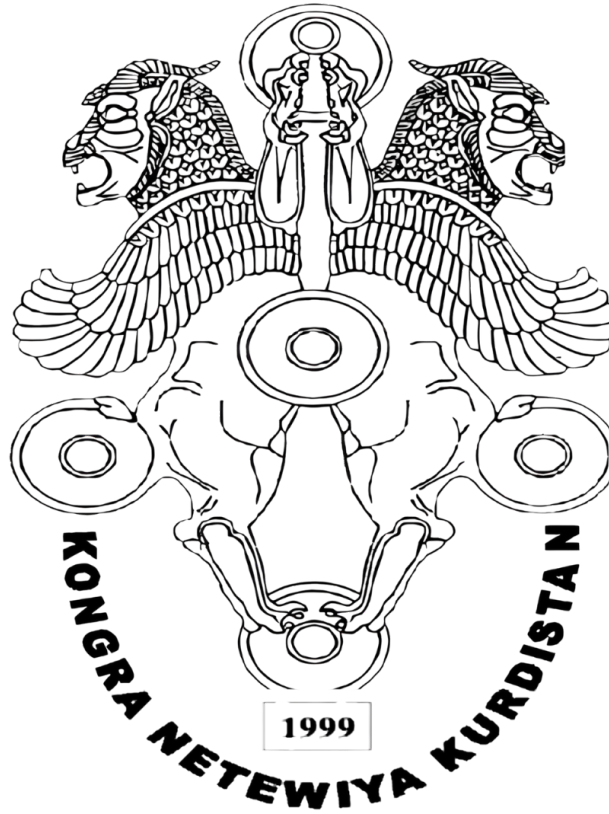




An Urgent Call to the International Community to Help Facilitate a Resolution to the Kurdish Question through Peace and Reconciliation

August 2026



***“A journey of a thousand kilometres
begins with a single step”
— Abdullah Öcalan***



THE KURDS: A NATION OF 60 MILLION DEMANDING RECOGNITION

For nearly a century, the Kurdish question has remained a central feature of Middle Eastern politics. Following World War I and the establishment of the present political order in Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran, the homeland of the Kurdish people, Kurdistan, was divided among the four states and subjected to policies of domination, assimilation and political denial.

Since World War I, the so-called “Kurdish card” has been a recurring feature of Western policy, with Kurdish aspirations repeatedly exploited for political and strategic advantage. The Kurdish question has been treated as a card to be played, a source of leverage, and a means of influencing regional stability. In Turkey, Iran and Syria, Kurdish political aspirations have consequently been portrayed as a supposed threat to national security. This narrative has placed the Kurds and the governments of these states in perpetual opposition, as though Kurdish rights and regional stability were inherently incompatible.

Resolving the Kurdish question is not solely Turkey’s responsibility. The conflict has endured for a century partly because international powers have repeatedly added fuel to the fire in pursuit of their own interests. Many Western governments have reinforced this imbalance by proscribing the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) and designating it a “terrorist organisation”, contributing to the stigmatisation of Kurdish communities and diaspora organisations within their own countries. Any meaningful change in Turkey’s approach to the Kurdish question must therefore be accompanied by an international shift in attitudes towards the Kurds.

The Kurdish people have never abandoned their struggle for freedom, nor will they ever do so. Their struggle rests on two fundamental principles: the demand for equality and freedom, and the determination to live as equal citizens within the countries in which they reside.

The PKK-led resistance is regarded as the twenty-ninth Kurdish uprising since World War I. Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the Kurdish people were deprived of their fundamental rights by the Turkish state, with international acquiescence and, at times, active support. The PKK did not create the Kurdish conflict. Rather, it emerged as a consequence of the denial, repression and systematic oppression imposed upon the Kurdish people by successive Turkish governments over the course of the last century.

THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE HAS SIDELINED DIPLOMACY AND NEGOTIATION

The 1991 Gulf War disrupted the regional order that had taken shape following World War I. In its aftermath, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq achieved de facto autonomy. The removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003 and the adoption of the Iraqi Constitution in 2005 subsequently secured formal and constitutional recognition of that autonomy.



The Arab Spring and the Syrian uprising, which began in 2011, weakened central government control across Syria. Beginning in 2012, Kurdish forces and political institutions assumed control of Kurdish-majority areas in the north and northeast, laying the foundations for self-administration in Rojava. From 2014 onwards, Kurdish fighters mounted a historic resistance against the Islamic State (ISIS), most notably during the siege of Kobane. Kurdish-led forces later played a decisive role in dismantling the territorial rule of ISIS in Syria.

Turkey responded to these developments by intensifying its military and security-based policies towards Kurdish movements, both within its borders and beyond them. For decades, the Turkish state has attempted to defeat or contain the Kurdish movement through force, yet it has failed to resolve the underlying political question. Equally significant is the inability of regional and international powers to suppress Kurdish political aspirations, together with the growing importance of the Kurds as pivotal actors whose decisions can influence regional and global affairs.

The lesson for Turkey should now be clear: attempts to exclude or defeat the Kurds have not produced lasting security, while cooperation with Kurdish actors offers a more credible path towards peace, stability and shared prosperity. Through the leadership and political thought of the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdish Freedom Movement has established itself as a major regional actor that can no longer be ignored.

Across the Middle East, the present political climate has increasingly marginalised diplomacy and negotiation. Approaches based on dialogue and political reason have been displaced by displays of military and technological power, resulting in the continued escalation of armed conflicts. The war in Gaza and the conflict involving Israel and Hezbollah that followed the events of 2023, the military confrontation involving the United States, Israel and Iran in 2026, and Russia's continuing war against Ukraine all reflect an international environment increasingly defined by force rather than diplomacy. These overlapping crises have compounded instability across the Middle East and beyond. Against this backdrop, Turkey has sought new avenues in both domestic and foreign policy to strengthen its position as a regional power.

For the Kurdish people, the primary objective remains the resolution of a political question that has persisted for more than a century. This can be achieved through political agreements with the states concerned, particularly Turkey, Iran and Syria, or through a comprehensive international framework for resolving the Kurdish question. A nation of 60 million people is demanding recognition.

The need for a regional or international conference on the Kurdish question has therefore become increasingly apparent. The principal objective of such a conference should be to establish a lasting political settlement and grant the Kurdish people the recognition, rights and political status they deserve. An objective examination of the Kurdish position in each country demonstrates that Kurdish communities have already developed political programmes, institutions and proposals suited to their respective circumstances. What remains absent is not Kurdish political agency, but the willingness of regional states and the international community to engage seriously with the Kurdish people as legitimate political actors, treating them with the respect, dignity and equality necessary for meaningful political dialogue.



A NEW ERA OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The Chronological Development of Turkey's New Kurdish Peace Process

On 1 October 2024,

Devlet Bahçeli, leader of Turkey's Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), made an unprecedented gesture by approaching members of the progressive, pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) in the Turkish Parliament and shaking hands with its co-chair, Tuncer Bakırhan. Shortly afterwards, Bahçeli declared: "We are entering a new era; while we seek peace in the world, we must ensure peace in our own country."¹

On 22 October 2024,

Bahçeli proposed during a parliamentary address that Abdullah Öcalan be given an opportunity to address Parliament and announce the dissolution of the PKK and the end of its armed struggle. It was a striking and profoundly symbolic reversal for a politician who had previously demanded Öcalan's execution and now called for his participation in a national dialogue on peace.

On 27 February 2025,

Öcalan responded with his historic "Call for Peace and Democratic Society", stating: "Mr Devlet Bahçeli's call, together with the will expressed by the President (Erdoğan) and the positive reactions of other political parties, has created an environment in which I am calling for the laying down of arms, and I take historical responsibility for this call."²

On 1 March 2025,

the PKK courageously declared a unilateral ceasefire. It also announced that it would comply with Öcalan's call and begin taking the necessary steps to implement it.

On 12 May 2025,

the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) announced the decisions adopted at its 12th Congress, including the dissolution of its organisational structure and its commitment to pursuing the Kurdish struggle for democracy and rights exclusively through political and civil means. Responding to Abdullah Öcalan's historic "Call for Peace and Democratic Society", the Congress concluded that the PKK had fulfilled its historical mission by bringing the Kurdish question to the threshold of a democratic political solution.³

On 11 July 2025,

a ceremony was held near Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, during which 30 members of the "Group for Peace and Democratic Society" symbolically burned their weapons. Organised in response to Abdullah Öcalan's "Call for Peace and Democratic Society", the ceremony was regarded as a historic milestone in the effort to achieve a peaceful and democratic resolution of the Kurdish question.⁴

1 Euronews. "Hardline Turkish Politician Offers Öcalan Parole if PKK Is Disbanded." 22 October 2024. Euronews

2 Öcalan, Abdullah. "Call for Peace and Democratic Society." 27 February 2025. Vigil for Öcalan

3 PKK 12th Congress. "PKK Final Declaration: Activities under the Name of the PKK Have Ended." 12 May 2025. ANF News

4 ANF. "Footage from the PKK's Weapon-Burning Ceremony." 12 July 2025. ANF News

***On 5 August 2025,***

the Turkish Parliament established the cross-party Commission for National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy. The Commission was tasked with laying the political and legal foundations for the peace process and developing a framework for the disarmament and social reintegration of PKK members.⁵

On 26 October 2025,

the Kurdish Freedom Movement announced that it was withdrawing its remaining fighters from Turkey into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as part of its commitment to the peace and disarmament process.⁶

On 18 February 2026,

the parliamentary Commission for National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy adopted its final joint report. The document represented a pivotal step towards establishing the legal and political foundations necessary to resolve the protracted conflict. It proposed a specific transitional legal framework, the advancement of democratisation measures and a comprehensive plan for the disarmament and subsequent social reintegration of former combatants. Despite substantial criticism of the Commission and disagreements concerning both the scope and direction of the process, the report was ultimately approved by a qualified parliamentary majority.

On 27 February 2026,

a further message from Abdullah Öcalan reaffirmed his commitment to the process and its underlying objective of achieving a political and democratic resolution of the Kurdish question.⁷

On 10 August 2026,

the Turkish Parliament passed landmark legislation establishing a legal framework for the disarmament, dissolution and social reintegration process. The legislation represented the most significant legal step taken by the Turkish state towards ending the decades-long conflict.⁸

On 18 August 2026,

the Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration was published in Turkey's Official Gazette and formally entered into force. Its enactment opened a new legal phase in the peace process and created mechanisms intended to facilitate the reintegration of qualifying former PKK members into civilian and political life.⁹

5 Commission for National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy. Commission Report. Turkish Grand National Assembly, 18 February 2026. Commission Report

6 Reuters. "Kurdish PKK Militants Announce Withdrawal from Turkey as Part of Disarmament." 26 October 2025. Reuters

7 Öcalan, Abdullah. "Message on the First Anniversary of the Peace and Democratic Society Call." 27 February 2026. DEM Party

8 Reuters. "Turkish Parliament Passes Landmark Law to Advance PKK Peace Process." 10 August 2026. Reuters

9 Associated Press. "Turkey's Erdoğan Signs Law Offering Conditional Pardon for Thousands of PKK Militants." 18 August 2026. Associated Press



THE LAW ON STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The law nevertheless falls short in several important respects. It remains rooted in an excessively security-oriented framework. Neither the word “Kurd” nor the word “democracy” appears anywhere in its text. For the Kurdish side, however, resolving the Kurdish question and democratising the Republic are central objectives of the ongoing process. Crucially, the law neither addresses Abdullah Öcalan’s legal status nor provides the conditions necessary for him to communicate and work freely as the process’s principal interlocutor. Kurdish representatives have repeatedly identified these conditions as essential to the process’s success.

The law could directly affect approximately 4,000 people imprisoned in PKK-related cases, many of whom Kurdish representatives regard as political prisoners. It could also affect approximately 75,000 pending investigation and prosecution files. According to estimates presented by DEM Party representatives, approximately 900 people were excluded from the law’s initial scope. Their cases may be reconsidered during a subsequent stage through further legislative measures.

Despite these limitations, the law represents an important first step towards creating the conditions necessary for democratic politics and a democratic Republic. The ultimate significance of this transition will depend on whether the legislation becomes the foundation for a broader transformation addressing not only security and criminal justice, but also the political, democratic, social, cultural and economic dimensions of the Kurdish question.

Regarding the law, Mr Öcalan stated:

“A journey of a thousand kilometres begins with a single step. With this law, we are setting out to resolve a historical problem. We are at the beginning of a democratisation process that will be at least as significant as the founding of the Republic. Just as immense effort and sacrifice were demonstrated during the founding of the Republic, we must now work with the same seriousness and determination to build a democratic Republic.”

INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

Mr Öcalan’s call of 27 February 2025, together with the subsequent steps taken by the Kurdish movement, has received widespread international support. Positive responses have come from the United Nations Secretary-General, national governments, regional authorities, trade unions, Indigenous organisations, academics, civil society groups and international social movements.

These responses have strengthened the Kurdish people’s conviction that they should con-



tinue pursuing this peaceful and democratic course with even greater confidence and determination. It is therefore all the more important for the international community to reaffirm and deepen its support now that Turkey has also begun taking initial, concrete steps. This historic opportunity requires sustained international engagement if it is to develop into a credible and lasting peace.

REGIONAL EFFECTS OF THE PROCESS

In light of the continuing challenges confronting Syria, Iraq and Iran, the dialogue process in Turkey is of profound regional importance. If allowed to develop, it could contribute to a more peaceful, stable and democratic Turkey while reducing tensions across the wider region, particularly in Rojava, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Kurdish regions of Iran.

The unresolved Kurdish question remains an underlying factor in many of the political and security challenges affecting the Middle East. A durable settlement in Turkey could therefore extend far beyond its borders, strengthening regional stability, reducing cross-border conflict and creating new possibilities for democratic coexistence.

THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE KURDISH QUESTION

The rapid and historic developments in the Turkish-Kurdish peace process offer renewed hope for resolving this century-long conflict. They also place a responsibility upon regional and international actors to help ensure the process's success.

Viewing the process solely as a bilateral Turkish-Kurdish matter fails to reflect its historical origins and regional dimensions. For decades, international actors treated the Kurdish question as an exclusively domestic matter for the states among which the Kurdish people were divided, namely Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In practice, however, international policies have profoundly shaped the conflict and its continuation.

Turkey's century-long policies of denial, assimilation, criminalisation and military repression were prolonged partly through international support or acquiescence. Many countries that regarded Turkey as a strategic ally supported, or failed to challenge, these policies. This approach was reinforced by the designation of the PKK as a "terrorist organisation".

These policies often blurred the essential distinction between armed activity and peaceful Kurdish political advocacy. They restricted legitimate democratic organising and allowed demands concerning Kurdish identity, language, representation and fundamental rights to be dismissed through the indiscriminate invocation of terrorism, including in European countries with substantial Kurdish communities.

Turkey has now begun taking steps towards a peaceful resolution with the Kurdish movement. Its strategic allies, particularly those within NATO and the Council of Europe, must make a corresponding policy shift. International policy should no longer obstruct a political settlement that Turkey itself has begun to pursue.

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE KURDS PROMOTES PEACE: OUR DEMANDS

**'RIGHT TO HOPE' FOR ABDULLAH ÖCALAN:
COUNCIL OF EUROPE MUST ACT**

**OUR HOPE FOR
PEACE**

**FREEDOM FOR ÖCALAN: POLITICAL
SOLUTION TO THE KURDISH QUESTION**



TAKE ACTION:



It is essential that the European Union and other international powers adopt a comparable approach grounded in dialogue, reconciliation and respect for the democratic rights of the Kurdish people.

- European governments must end the criminalisation of peaceful pro-Kurdish activism and ensure that counterterrorism policies are not used to suppress lawful political expression, cultural activity or community organisation. These policies affect an estimated two to three million Kurds living in Europe.
- All governments and international institutions that continue to designate the PKK as a terrorist organisation should undertake an immediate and transparent legal review of that designation. Such a review must account for the PKK's announced dissolution, its termination of armed struggle and the continuing disarmament process, with the objective of



removing the PKK from all international terrorist lists.

- The international community, particularly the European Union and the governments of Germany, the United Kingdom, France and the United States, should provide diplomatic, political and technical support for the peace process.
- Turkey must fully implement the European Court of Human Rights judgment in Öcalan v. Turkey (No. 2) of 18 March 2014. This requires legislative reform establishing a meaningful prospect of release and a mechanism for reviewing aggravated life sentences. The Court found that life imprisonment without any possibility of review or conditional release violated Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.
- Abdullah Öcalan must be granted an appropriate legal status and conditions that allow him to communicate and work freely as the principal interlocutor in the peace process. A negotiation cannot succeed while its central negotiator remains isolated and unable to perform his role effectively.
- European Union member states and other international actors should encourage Turkey to engage in good faith by combining principled diplomatic pressure with mediation, monitoring and practical support. Turkey must uphold democratic principles and commit itself to a credible, inclusive and internationally supported peace process.

CONTACT

KNK

Kongreya Neteweyî ya Kurdistanê
Kurdistan National Congress

www.knk-Kurdistan.com
Info@knk-Kurdistan.com
@Kongrakurdistan