

Kurdish nationalist DEM Party delegation meets imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan

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S?rr? Süreyya Önder and Pervin Buldan, deputies of the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party), met on December 28 with Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), who has been in prison since 1999. The last such talks took place between 2013 and 2015, before they ended with the resumption of a bloody conflict.

The renewed negotiations between Turkey and the PKK, which Turkey has been trying to suppress for 40 years, are part of the war in the Middle East—which has escalated with the genocide committed by Israel in Gaza, the struggle for the division of Syria, and the efforts of US imperialism to reshape the region.

The statement issued by the delegation said that during the meeting with Öcalan “the latest developments in the Middle East and Turkey were evaluated”. Öcalan’s evaluations were quoted in the following words:

“Re-strengthening the Turkish-Kurdish fraternity has become a historic responsibility, as well as a destiny-determining importance and urgency for all peoples... The events in Gaza and Syria have shown that the solution to this problem, which is being gangrened by external interventions, can no longer be put off... I have the competence and the determination to make the necessary positive contribution to the new paradigm that Mr. Bahçeli and Mr. Erdoğan are strengthening... This is the era of peace, democracy and brotherhood for Turkey and the region.”

These statements and that made by Buldan later on X, “Due to the sensitivity of the process, we will not make a statement to the press until it is mature”, show that the bargains continue in secret from the public.

The same DEM Party delegation met on January 2 with Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which is part of the “People’s Alliance” led by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The meetings, which are closed to the press, will continue next week with Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP), the Kemalist Republican People’s Party and other parties in parliament.

The way for new negotiations with Öcalan began with Bahçeli’s unprecedented call on October 22. “When the isolation of the terrorist chief [imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan] is lifted, he should come and speak at the DEM Party group meeting of the Turkish parliament,” Bahçeli declared, adding, “Let him shout that terrorism is completely over and the organization [PKK] has been dismantled. If he shows this resilience and determination, the way for the legal regulation of the ‘right to hope’ and its use should be wide open.”

Analysing this development, the *World Socialist Web Site* explained that the Turkish ruling elite’s claims of “peace and democracy” were a sham and aimed at strengthening their hand in the face of the escalating war in the Middle East.

In fact, on the same days as Bahçeli’s statement, Erdoğan said on the process: “While the maps are being redrawn in blood, while the war that Israel has waged from Gaza to Lebanon is approaching our borders, we are trying to strengthen our internal front. We want 85 million of us to come together under the common denominator of Turkey.”

Bahçeli’s New Year message also sums up the approach of the Turkish ruling elite. While Bahçeli claimed that the talks between Öcalan and the DEM Party delegation “not only strengthened democracy and the hopes attached to the Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood, but also became the impetus for an auspicious beginning,” he also declared that there was no room for the suppressed political and cultural rights of the Kurdish people in this process: “There is no such process as a new solution or opening. What is happening and what should happen is the active, unconditional, uncalculated, uncoerced, reassuring and sincere engagement of the interlocutors in the name of national survival and future.”

On the one hand, Ankara wants the PKK to lay down its arms on Öcalan’s initiative, and on the other it wants the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Syria—led by the Kurdish nationalist People’s Protection Units (YPG)—to be liquidated. The SDF leads a de facto formation in Syria called the “Autonomous Administration of Northern and

Eastern Syria”.

The Kurdish question, which is inherently an international problem due to the presence of the Kurdish people in Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq, has become an integral part of the imperialist struggle to divide the Middle East, especially after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the war for regime change in Syria in 2011.

Erdo?an’s “peace process” with the PKK, initiated in 2009, was an attempt, with the approval of the US and European powers, to become part of this developing war of plunder. After the US made Kurdish militias the main proxy force in the war for regime change in Syria and the emergence of a YPG-led proto-state in the region, Erdo?an ended this process in 2015 and launched a violent offensive against Kurdish forces both in Turkey and Syria.

Fearing that a Kurdish state in Syria would encourage similar initiatives in Turkey, Ankara, together with its Islamist proxies, has organised numerous military operations in northern Syria and occupied large swathes of territory to prevent the creation of a unified region controlled by Kurdish forces.

The new negotiations come amid regime change in Syria and preparations for war against Iran. Last month, forces led by the al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) overthrew Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who was backed by Iran and Russia. In the meantime, the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) launched an operation against US-backed Kurdish forces.

The SNA took Tel Rifaat and Manbij from the SDF and moved east of the Euphrates. However, with the US intervening with threats of sanctions and troop deployments, especially in Kobani, the Turkish-backed SMO offensive appears to have halted. On the other hand, Ankara is trying to use its influence over the HTS to impose the liquidation of the Kurdish forces and their subordination to the Damascus administration without any status.

However, the decisive power in the struggle to divide Syria and the Middle East in general is US imperialism. While Washington is trying to bring the HTS leadership under its control under the pretext of fighting ISIS, it sees the SDF as its main proxy force both in maintaining its presence in Syria and in the war against Iran. The US has increased the number of its military personnel in the country from 900 to 2,000 and extended sanctions against Syria until 2029.

Moreover, as Israel—the US spearhead in the Middle East—expands its occupation of southern Syria, it has declared the Kurdish leadership its main ally in the country. Salih Muslim, the former co-chairman of the PKK’s sister organisation, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), has also declared his support for an alliance with Israel.

Having largely destroyed Syria’s military defence capacity and infrastructure with its ongoing air strikes, Israel is distancing itself from the HTS and emphasizing its conflicting interests with Turkey as a pretext for extending its occupation of Syria and imposing a pliant regime subservient to itself.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said: “The new regime in Syria is a terrorist gang... The situation in Syria is not reassuring. There are clashes in the coastal cities, there are open threats from Erdogan to eliminate Kurdish autonomy, there is harassment of Christians, and this regime is an Islamist regime that wants to control all of Syria.”

While the HTS has decided to dissolve Syria’s armed factions and join the central army, the fate of the SDF-led autonomous administration and armed forces remains unclear. Kurdish forces hold around 40 percent of the country’s territory, including most of its energy resources and granaries. This region is home to US troops and bases.

A delegation from the SDF General Command met with HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani in Damascus on Monday. Bessam Ishaq, the head of the Syrian Democratic Council’s Washington office, told the *Asharq Al-Awsat* that the SDF meetings in Damascus “only dealt with military issues and discussed the coordination mechanism and common issues”.

The claim that the negotiations—which are part of the struggle of predatory US imperialism and its regional allies and proxies, including Israel and Turkey, for resources, energy routes and influence in Syria and the Middle East, and towards war against Iran—will bring peace and democracy anywhere is a deception. All the forces are preparing for new wars in which they will send the toiling masses to death with the rhetoric of peace.

The democratic solution of the Kurdish question and an end to the escalating genocide and war in the Middle East depends on uniting and mobilising the international working class based on an anti-war, socialist programme to take power against the imperialist powers and their bourgeois proxies.



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