

THE CEASEFIRE IS OVER - A NEW PHASE HAS BEGUN



ASSAULTS ON THE KURDISH LIBERATION MOVEMENT INTENSIFIED UNDER THE AKP GOVERNMENT

The leader of the Kurdish Liberation Movement, Abdullah Öcalan has decided to withdraw from the political process due to the lack of response to his efforts for peace. Subsequently, the KCK Executive Committee decided to end the unilateral ceasefire which has lasted 13 months.

The Kurdish Liberation Movement has started a new phase. The negative developments since the start of the so-called 'democratic initiative' which revealed the real, oppressive intentions of the AKP government, have led to the decisions being taken.

The KCK has been in a state of inactivity for over a year. Despite all the steps towards peace and democracy that have been taken during that time, the state has intensified its assaults targeting both Kurdish legal and political representatives as well as guerrilla forces. As a result of this the Kurdish struggle has entered a new phase.

The Kurdish Liberation Movement, which offered many opportunities for peace to the Turkish government after the capture of leader Abdullah Öcalan, started the process of resistance on 1 June 2004. During that time, the Turkish army which perpetrated many military operations like for example the occupation of Zap in 2008, had to withdraw as a result of heavy defeat by the Kurdish guerrilla in the first week of the operation. Despite all the efforts to prevent it, the DTP (Democratic Society Party) succeeded in increasing the number of its mayors to 99 during the local elections on 29 March 2009. Following below is a brief chronology outlining events and developments since the elections.

- ✚ The KCK decided upon a unilateral ceasefire on 13 April 2009 after the successful local elections in March, which was also a form of referendum.
- ✚ After his visit to America on 11 April 2009, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan stated that during a security committee meeting involving Turkey, the USA and Iraq had agreed to a 'triple action plan' against the PKK.
- ✚ The Turkish state started to implement its action plan on 14 April 2009 by carrying out „political massacre“ operations.
- ✚ The Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan prepared a road-map with the aim to help and find a peaceful and democratic solution to the conflict.
- ✚ However, as the road-map has not been published, the process experienced a move of one step forward and two step backwards.
- ✚ The process towards peace gained a new momentum upon Öcalan's decision to initiate Peace Groups and a movement for the democratic resolution of the conflict.
- ✚ On 19 September 2009, a Peace Group from Kandil and Maxmur refugee camps consisting of 34 people including children came to Turkey through the Habur border was joyfully welcomed by millions of Kurds.
- ✚ However, the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan who could not tolerate these encouraging developments reversed the whole process by saying that they will start all over again.
- ✚ The Turkish media played a significant role in intensifying the tensions within society.
- ✚ Öcalan received punishment and put into solitary confinement of 10 days and by being placed in the „death pit“ on 17 September 2009.
- ✚ The intense political operations oppressing the Kurdish movement targeted Kurdish politicians, children, students, women and human rights advocates.
- ✚ The final decision to ban the DTP took over two years and contributed to an increasingly tense political atmosphere.
- ✚ Öcalan intervened again during this process.
- ✚ After the DTP's ban, Kurdish politics continued its work with the newly formed Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).
- ✚ Subsequently, the BDP has been subject to assaults by the Turkish government.
- ✚ The DTK, Kurdish mayors and representatives of civil society organisations have been targets during what has been called the 24 December coup. Over 1500 Kurdish politicians were arrested and imprisoned. Kurds characterised this as a political massacre.
- ✚ Assaults on Kurds have reached unprecedented levels during this time in which the AKP government kept talking publicly about democratic change.
- ✚ Since then 24 prisoners have been „massacred“ in prisons including 61 civilians, 35 journalists have been arrested, 397 people have been tortured and 5,000 detained.
- ✚ More than 4,000 children have been taken to court for hurling stones.
- ✚ Nine children have been massacred by the Turkish state.
- ✚ The first victim was Abdulsamet Erip (14) who has been killed in Colemerg during a children's festival. The most recent victim was Oguzhan Akyurek (13) who has been killed by a soldier's bomb in the Qergeli district of Van on 25 May 2010.
- ✚ Pressures on Kurdish press and media organisations also intensified.
- ✚ Metin Alatas of the Adana branch of Azadiya Welat newspaper was killed.
- ✚ The former chief editor of Azadiya Welat, Vedat Kursun has been sentenced to 166 years of imprisonment, which is a total of three lifetimes.
- ✚ Turkey has received 12 convictions as a result of cases heard by the European Human Rights Court in relation to the freedom of expression.
- ✚ Peace activists have also been subject to legal proceedings. Mehmet Serif, spokesperson of the Peace and Democratic Resolution Group, has been arrested on the allegation that he 'carried out organisational propaganda'.
- ✚ The Turkish army led 262 military operations between April and December 2009. It has also perpetrated 168 mortar and howitzer assaults most of which took place during the time of the ceasefire last year.
- ✚ The so-called special warfare methods in Kurdistan have intensified.
- ✚ Rape scandals have been reported in cities such as Siirt and Erdis.
- ✚ Incidents of disappearances and kidnappings which happened in the 1990s have started to reoccur.
- ✚ The military operations that started after Newroz 2010 have become an everyday occurrences since the beginning of May. The border areas of Kurdistan continue to be subject to intense military bombardment.

- ✚ New alliances have been made between Turkey, Iran and Syria. All three countries have increased their pressure on Kurds.
- ✚ The Arabic Belt in Syria has been revived. A new phase started on 9 May 2010 with the execution of five Kurdish political prisoners.
- ✚ Iran and Turkey are bombarding the area under guerrilla control. An air strike with 20 planes hit the area for seven hours in Xinere and Xakurke. Four guerrillas and two civilians including a child have lost their lives in this operation. Many settlements have been left in an uninhabitable state.
- ✚ The DCK (Democratic Confederation of Kurdistan) has repeatedly emphasised that it will maintain the ceasefire which started on 13 April 2009. However, as there have been no signs of a start of a dialogue from the Turkish state, Kurdish Liberation Leader Abdullah Öcalan announced that he is withdrawing from the peace process on 31 May 2010.
- ✚ Peace representatives have also been subject to legal proceedings. Mehmet Serif, spokesman of the Peace and Democratic Resolution Group, was arrested for allegedly „carrying out propaganda for our organisation“.
- ✚ According to statements made on 1 June 2010, Kurdish guerrilla forces emphasized that they will make full use of their right to defence.
- ✚ The DCK Executive Committee declared an end to the ceasefire on 1 June 2010. It stated that 'the AKP government, which apparently can do anything for the sake of power, is chiefly responsible for the bloodshed and for jeopardising the future of the people of Kurdistan. It has sabotaged and destroyed the atmosphere of peace and dialogue with this attitude. Thereby, it has rendered our unilateral ceasefire process meaningless. The AKP government is responsible for the end of a 13 months-long peace process, not our movement'.

The PKK has declared six unilateral ceasefires in the last 18 years but never received a response. The first unilateral ceasefire was announced in March 1993. The Kurdistan National Liberation Movement has stated that since 1993 they have been trying to resolve the conflict through a political dialogue with the relevant government authorities. However, while it was implementing the decision to end the armed struggle and withdraw its forces from outside Turkey in 1999, the Turkish state took advantage of this situation and intensified its operations as a result of which 300 guerrillas have lost their lives.