

Abdullah Ocalan Must Be Freed!

Statement by the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement

18 February 1999

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) strongly condemns the kidnapping of Abdullah Ocalan, chairman of the Kurdish Workers Party, and the murder and repression of the Kurdish masses protesting his arrest.

The kidnapping of Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan marks another bloody chapter in the imperialists' long-standing effort to crush the Kurdish people's struggle. This was the culmination of a coordinated manhunt by the world's secret police forces. Ocalan was hounded and pursued from one country to another. A U.S.-orchestrated Turkey-Israel rapprochement originally drove him out of Syria. In Russia, the neo-KGB contemptuously dismissed the Russian Parliament's welcome of Ocalan and sent him packing, allegedly after consultation with the CIA. The Netherlands refused him entry to plead the Kurds' case before the International Court of Justice. And the highly guarded secrecy surrounding the basic facts of his kidnapping in Kenya itself stinks of reactionary intrigue and conspiracy.

Beneath the thinnest veneer of parliamentary democracy, Turkey is a torture state, ruled by a military utterly beholden to the U.S., Germany and other imperialist countries. London bobbies, Paris gendarmes and other police forces across Europe made the support of their governments for the Turkish regime brutally clear by their bloodthirsty attacks on the Kurdish youth demanding Ocalan's freedom. When Israeli goons shot and murdered three Kurdish youth and wounded many more, this latest act of Zionist terrorism was backed by the U.S., which justified it by calling the PKK "terrorist". What is the difference between the PKK and armed organisations in other countries whom the U.S. labels "freedom fighters"? The most important distinction is whether a group fits in with U.S. imperialist interests.

The many thousands of Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries who have passed through that country's hellholes in recent years have a saying: they are in the small prisons within the big prison that is Turkey. Amnesty International and other human rights groups have denounced the widespread and systematic torture of those in the hands of Turkey's legal system, not to speak of the government death squads that simply murder opponents in their homes or offices or on the street. What does it say about the Turkish system of justice that every day now thousands of Kurds are putting their lives on the line simply to demand a UN commission to ensure Ocalan will not be tortured and killed? After all, the oppression of the Kurds is the law of the land in Turkey. It is still forbidden to teach the Kurdish language in school. Kurdish parliamentarians and poets languish in prison merely for discussing Kurdish rights. The Turkish ruling classes' true intentions for Ocalan are seen not in their feeble lip-service to legal procedures but in the fact that they have promised a "short, swift" trial, turned away his Dutch lawyers at the country's borders, and arrested 350 members of the pro-Kurdish parliamentary party.

Turkey's rulers and their Western backers are dancing with joy. But their pompous boasts are already being drowned out by the cries of outrage and defiance that are rolling through Europe's urban centres. A new generation of Kurdish youth has risen to fight oppression, and they have

fully demonstrated their unquenchable thirst for liberation. What 50 years ago was a problem confined to a remote corner of the former Ottoman Empire is now rocking the capitals of Europe, and the Kurdish cause is gaining the sympathy and support of millions. The shantytowns of Turkey's cities, swollen with Kurdish refugees from the military's counter-insurgency war, are seething. Turkey's rulers and their imperialist backers will, as Mao Tsetung said of all oppressors, surely know no peace. Abdullah Ocalan must be freed from their clutches.

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