



International Initiative

Postbox 10 05 11 • D-50445 Cologne
Tel: +49-221-130 15 59 • Fax: +49-221-790 76 10 30
www.freeocalan.org • info@freedom-for-ocalan.com

"Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan – Peace in Kurdistan"

Press statement

Öcalan's Freedom Is Your Freedom

After 25 years of captivity and shortly before his 75th birthday, the question of Abdullah Öcalan's freedom becomes more urgent than ever. But this is not only about him. It is about stopping the spiral of endless wars and freeing societies from the iron grip of the states.

25 years ago, on 15 February 1999, Abdullah Öcalan was abducted from Nairobi, Kenya in a NATO-orchestrated operation — an early example of the later so-called "extraordinary renditions". His abduction and subsequent sentence to death did not solve any problems. Rather, it demonstrated the blatant unwillingness of the nation states—including every single EU member state—to address the Kurdish issue. Despite this, a lot has changed in the years since 1999.

We, the International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan" denounce once again the international cooperation that led to his abduction and imprisonment, and we equally denounce the international cooperation that makes the aggressive wars of Turkey and occupation of several neighboring countries possible. But for us these notable anniversaries—25 years since his abduction and his upcoming 75th birthday in April—are also an opportunity to examine what Öcalan has achieved on a global scale – against the most fantastic odds.

As a person, he survived years and years of isolation torture that was expected to break him. Far from that, he remains unbroken, has even grown in stature, and expresses his philosophical ideas, historical knowledge, and political proposals in great clarity in his numerous books. The few people that were able to meet him in prison tell about an impressive figure that gives the impression of a sage.

As a public personality, before 1999, outside the Middle East he was little known, if at all. Those who had heard of him knew him mainly as the leader of an insurgent group. Today he is respected as an experienced politician with the widely recognized potential to mediate a major peace between warring parties.

As a writer, he had been published in Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic before. His books were mostly circulated among Kurdish activists and their friends. In only one decade, between 2001 and 2011, he produced an unparalleled body of works that by now has been at least partially published in 25 languages. He is respected by many people around the world as a leading revolutionary thinker of the 21st century.

Equally important are Öcalan's political gains. Not only has he managed to restructure the Kurdish freedom movement which made the Rojava Revolution possible. His ideas have also sparked projects like the HDP in North Kurdistan

First Signatories (1999)

Mairead Corrigan-Maguire (Nobel Peace Prize, Ireland),
Dario Fo (Nobel Prize in Literature, Italy), **Adolfo Perez Esquivel** (Nobel Peace Prize, Argentina), **José Ramos-Horta** (Nobel Peace Prize, East Timor), **José Saramago** (Nobel Prize in Literature, Portugal), **Danielle Mitterrand** (Foundation France Liberté, France), **Ramsey Clark** (form. Attorney General, USA), **Uri Avnery** (Gush Shalom, Israel), **Noam Chomsky** (Linguist, Publicist, MIT, USA), **Alain Lipietz** (MEP, France), **Pedro Marset Campos** (MEP, Spain), **Lord Eric Avebury** (House of Lords, UK), **Harry Cohen** (MP Labour, UK), **Cynog Dafis** (MP Plaid Cymru, Wales, UK), **Lord Raymond Hylton** (House of Lords, UK), **Lord John Nicholas Rea** (House of Lords, UK), **Walid Jumblatt** (Leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, Lebanon), **Rudi Vis** (MP Labour, UK), **Paul Flynn** (MP Labour, UK), **Máiréad Keane** (Sinn Féin, Northern Ireland), **Domenico Gallo** (form. Senator, Italy), **Livio Pepino** (Magistratura Democratica, Italien), **Xabier Arzalluz** (President PNV, Spain), **Tony Benn** (MP Labour, UK), **Alain Calles** (President MRAP, France), **Gianna Nannini** (Singer-songwriter, Italy), **Geraldine Chaplin** (Actress, Spain), **David MacDowall** (Writer, UK), **Dietrich Kittner** (Cabaret artist, Germany), **Alice Walker** (Writer, USA), **Franca Rame** (Writer and actress, Italy), **Chris Kutschera** (Writer, France), **Prof. Dr. Jean Ziegler** (MP and Publicist, Switzerland), **Prof. Dr. Angela Davis** (University of California, Santa Cruz, USA), **Prof. Dr. Norman Paech** (International Law, Germany), **Prof. Dr. Werner Ruf** (International Law, Germany), **Prof. Dr. Gerhard Stuby** (International Law, Germany), **Hans Branscheidt** (medico international, Germany)

and Turkey, seriously threatening to shake the power balance to the detriment of Erdoğan's AKP, and the democratic self-administration of the Ezidîs in Şengal after the Genocide committed by the Islamic State.

What Öcalan achieved in the quarter of a century from solitary confinement in a lonely cell on an island in the middle of the Marmara Sea has had a tremendous influence in shaping today's Middle East and will continue to do through the movement he created. Incidentally, the title of a 1994 book by him is "We will change the face of the Middle East". Against all odds, Öcalan has certainly made good on that promise.

So, how is all this important for every one of us? One of the key topics Öcalan has focused on in his writing is the contradiction between the nation state and the societies. Restriction of societal freedoms through "anti-terror" legislation, austerity laws and increasingly a massive militarization—not to mention the effects of the endless wars in the Middle East itself—have a detrimental effect on everybody's freedom, including yours.

A successful effort to free Öcalan from his prison cell requires and means a reversal of all of these tendencies in a key area of the world: Turkey and the Middle East. Therefore, the struggle for his freedom is connected very closely with all struggles against these.

But there is more to it: Since he has become a symbol as well as an effective actor for progressive change in the Middle East already, his freedom has much wider implications. It will mean not only freedom for other political prisoners, but a boost for the democratic and revolutionary changes that have already been brought about by people—and especially women—inspired by the ideas formulated by Öcalan, including the now famous connection he made between women, life, and freedom. His ideas offer a way out of the current crises the region and the world face. His freedom will strengthen the struggle against genocidal nation-statism and increase the freedom for all—including your freedom.

The task to make that happen is on all of us. Countless signature campaigns, demonstrations, hunger strikes, and juridical and political efforts have brought us far but have not yet ensured his release. Öcalan's upcoming 75th birthday on 4 April and the ongoing murderous attacks on the Kurds highlight the urgency of the struggle for his freedom and a change in the course of events. He has achieved incredible and inspiring successes against the most fantastic odds. So should we: Read his books, organize, and join the Free Öcalan campaign and our struggle to win his freedom, your freedom, now.

International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan"

Cologne, 14 February 2024