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**THE EUROPEAN UNION AND PRESIDENT CHIRAC
CALL ON TURKEY NOT TO EXECUTE THE DEATH
SENTENCE OF ABDULLAH ÖCALAN**

The death sentence of Abdullah Öcalan was handed down without surprise on June 29, 1999, after a summary trial of nine hearings. The president of the Ankara State Security Court, Turgut Okyay, presiding on Imrali prison island, declared the leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) guilty of having “created the armed terrorist organization known as the Kurdistan Workers’ Party and ordered acts that caused thousands of innocent victims,” with the goal of “separating part of the territory under Turkish sovereignty in order to establish a

so-called Kurdish state.” In his final statement, Abdullah Öcalan declared: “I refuse to be labeled a traitor. I did not fight to divide the country, but to live in a democratic one.”

The court, ruling unanimously with three judges, rejected any mitigating circumstances that might have commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. The decision must still be confirmed by the Turkish Court of Cassation, and will then enter the political stage, since the Turkish Parliament must ratify all executions. Several weeks, even months, will be required to

complete the Turkish legal process. Meanwhile, Öcalan’s lawyers have announced their intention to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, although such an appeal will not be suspensive.

Although no death sentence has been carried out in Turkey since 1984, many observers believe that Öcalan’s case could be an exception. The Turkish police’s orchestration of highly publicized demonstrations by the so-called “families of PKK victims” appears aimed at preparing public opinion for Öcalan’s hanging. Former Turkish president General Kenan Evren, in an interview with *Hürriyet*, said he was “ready to play the executioner” and “place

the rope around Öcalan's neck." Another influential military leader, General Füsunoğlu, former commander of the land forces, declared that "for humanitarian reasons, the hanging should take place as soon as possible." A large number of European countries immediately called on Turkey not to carry out the execution after the verdict was pronounced. The Council of Europe has already threatened to suspend Turkey's membership if the Kurdish leader is hanged. Europe as a whole has appealed to Ankara for clemency. The European Union, through Germany, which then held the rotating presidency of the EU, stated: "We simply say this: if Turkey wants to join Europe, it must draw closer to the criteria that prevail here." In a statement released at the Rio Economic Summit, EU heads of state and government condemned the verdict and reminded Turkey that the death penalty is not among Europe's 'common values.' President Jacques Chirac declared that "France, like the European countries and many others, hopes that the sentence will not be carried out and that it will be commuted to another penalty." The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, described the sentence as "disturbing," given the doubts surrounding the fairness of the trial. "Certain aspects of the legal proceedings (...) deviated from international norms,"

she said.

However, the United States refrained from criticizing Ankara. "We have long believed that Öcalan is an international terrorist who should be brought to justice," said Joe Lockhart, spokesperson for the White House.

In the past, the Turkish regime has always ignored international protests. In 1961, despite the risk of a diplomatic crisis, it hanged Prime Minister Adnan Menderes

and two of his democratically elected ministers.

The trial of Abdullah Öcalan began on May 31 at 10 a.m. in a specially prepared courtroom on Imrali Island, before the Ankara State Security Court, which was transferred there for the occasion.

Of the roughly 800 journalists and observers who came to attend, only twenty – twelve Turks and eight foreigners – were admitted into the courtroom. The others were forced to wait in the small seaside town of Mudanya, 25 km from the island, and make do with selective images broadcast by state television TRT.

The defence lawyers, who had been threatened with death and physically assaulted by police (on April 30, six of them were beaten by their own police escorts and hospitalized), were never allowed to meet privately with their client or to review the case materials with him. They had considered withdrawing from the trial to avoid legitimizing a "judicial parody." At the request of Öcalan, whom they met on May 27, and under assurances from government envoys that made them believe that a postponement request might be accepted, they decided to attend. But from the opening of the trial, the judges' rejection of the request for postponement showed how little they regarded the civilian government's opinion, and that – in accordance with the army's wishes – they would proceed with a trial intended to achieve Öcalan's political and physical destruction, and to deter Kurds from any future challenge to their condition. The two main defence lawyers, including Me Kaplan, ultimately withdrew, declaring that they would not "legitimize a travesty of justice before a court of contested legality, amid massive and flagrant violations of defence rights that

gravely offend the honor and dignity of the legal profession."

In his opening statement, delivered from behind a glass cage, the PKK leader said: "I wish to state that I have not been subjected to any pressure or mistreatment since my capture (...) I want to live for peace and brotherhood. I call for an end to armed struggle. The PKK must no longer oppose the democratic Turkish state... The Kurdish and Turkish peoples must not fight each other. I want to put an end to this. I have reached the point where I understand – even if it is too late – that my life can still have meaning for Turkey (...) Let this rebellion be the last Kurdish rebellion in Turkey (...) I fully accept responsibility for all the acts attributed to me in the indictment; to deny it would be pointless." He also added: "I wish to address the honorable families of the martyrs and tell them that I share their grief."

Then, in a written defense widely circulated in the press, Öcalan advocated the "union and democratic coexistence of the Turkish and Kurdish peoples within the Republic." This, he said, required a refounding of the Republic – to recognize the Kurds' cultural and linguistic rights, and to allow them to form their own political parties to express their demands within a democratic framework. In exchange for such a peace settlement, Öcalan pledged to withdraw his guerrillas from the mountains within three months, bringing a definitive end to the long era of Kurdish armed uprisings. The Turkish General Staff, in a communiqué issued on June 7, categorically rejected this peace proposal, declaring that "The State will never negotiate with terrorists."

Excerpts from Öcalan's Defence: "Beyond a detailed rebuttal of the prosecutor's indictment, the core of my defense rests on the Kurdish question, which I consider far more important,

and on the means of transforming the last Kurdish rebellion led by the PKK into a historical agreement and a possible solution.

I have tried to outline the prospects for a peaceful resolution to this uprising, which may be viewed as a low-intensity war. Indeed, I first sought this approach at the request of President Özal. On March 15, 1993, I declared at a press conference: We are not pursuing the immediate separation of Turkey.

We are realistic about this. This is not a tactical maneuver but a deeply considered position.

Those who understand the historical, political, and economic realities of both peoples will agree that separation is not an option (...). As I have explained in many interviews, we want relations between these peoples to be redefined. The current situation sheds the blood of Kurds and Turks alike and destroys their livelihoods."

"By responding in this way to the prosecutor's charges, I have sought – not only in my own name but in that of the PKK, whose leader I am, and of the people who rose up – to set out the underlying problems. However well-documented the indictment may be, I have shown that these problems exist and must be addressed through genuine efforts toward a solution. During the uprising, there were mistakes and excesses on both sides. I have acknowledged the unnecessary violence and cruelty of many operations (...). All nations experience oppression and cruelty, but our greatest duty is to free our Republic from these evils (...).

That is why I say this trial should become an opportunity to establish sacred peace.

*Our debt to the Republic can only be repaid through the **democratic union of our peoples**.*

The Republic cannot be founded on servitude and denial (...).

"Democratic union is the next historical stage of the Republic. Although the prosecution, citing our party's first program and my speeches, concluded that I sought a new state and that 'everything is for independence and freedom,' I have sought, as one of those chiefly responsible for this historical experience, to show that my goal is to advance toward democratic union. Even without my previous texts at hand, I have stated in my unilateral ceasefires and indirect talks that independence and freedom – both individual and collective – can only be realized within a Turkey taken as a whole and the democratisation of the Republic."

"Scientifically speaking, an independent state cannot be a realistic claim for the Kurdish people, who are surrounded on four sides by hostile neighbours, confined to mountainous terrain, divided economically, socially, culturally, and politically, burdened by feudal structures, lacking even its own alphabet, and whose majority lives in large metropolitan centres. Moreover, the historical experience of the past two centuries, and the PKK's own uprising, have proved that armed struggle for secession only worsens the situation. Both sides suffer, and both endure immense pain and loss. There will be no division – yet the problem will persist.

Evil cannot be cured by destroying the patient, nor treated partially apart from its root cause – the State itself."

"The most important outcome, historically, is that this marks the end of the era of uprisings (...).

*In a democratic republic, there is no place for violence. The means of expressing problems cannot be rebellion or revolution – in times of peace, it must be **constitutional evolution**. This is what the end of the twentieth century demands (...).*

"In this framework, it is the duty of our people in the East to pursue their deep aspiration for

democratization together with the State, within a new democratic unity (...). This is a path of reform that will progress gradually, but ultimately it will lead to progress. We must build and develop our democracy together."

"To honour as heroes all the martyrs who strived for the creation and defence of the Republic, to commemorate its founder with gratitude and respect, to salute its flag with pride – these are principles we uphold (...).

We sought, in fact, to overcome the huge backwardness, naivety, and servitude of the East through improvement, progress, and freedom (...). But note the paradox: today we are judged (...) for the greatest crime against the Republic. That is a misfortune, not an expression of our essence (...).

"(...) Human beings can learn from past mistakes and reach the truth. History and society advance in this way.

Only God can walk a straight path without error. Even the prophets admitted they were not free from faults.

We, too, and I, have made mistakes – and this caused great suffering. I have tried above all to express this during my testimony (...).

"Had we been raised and educated in a democratic environment, would such a rebellion ever have taken place? It is to be expected from a man whose very identity has been denied (...). If I fear to recognize myself, how could I recognize the Republic and its legal system, how could I be a man of my time? The popular reality in which I live is this. Furthermore, if the vast majority of Kurds have not 'become Turkish,' it is not their fault.

It also proves that the system is not modern and cannot be imposed by force.

Thus, mutual errors multiplied, and their cruel verdict has been rendered in this last uprising."

"All my efforts are now focused on finding a solution to this issue without ever again resorting to the language of arms (...)."

"This trial should become the most important hearing for peace in the history of the Republic (...)."

We strongly affirm that without an honourable and just peace, life has no meaning – neither inside nor

outside the country. This was first proclaimed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: 'Peace at home and peace in the world.'

We believe that the Republic he founded can achieve peace only within a democratic framework – and that this is the greatest service that can be rendered to both regional and global peace."

proliferation of Turkish television broadcasts would make the Kurdish language disappear." When one minister, Cemil Çiçek, objected by insisting that "there are only Turks in Turkey," Özal retorted: "Look at yourselves. You're all different. Who among you can claim descent from Central Asia? Who here has slanted eyes?"

THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONDEMNS TURKEY FOR "REPEATED AND SERIOUS VIOLATIONS" OF HUMAN RIGHTS

In a resolution adopted on June 9, 1999, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe condemned Turkey for the first time for "repeated and serious violations" of human rights committed by its security forces in Kurdistan. A member of the Council since its creation, Turkey has been regularly on the agenda of both the Council of Europe and its judicial body, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which has condemned it on several occasions, while dozens of other Kurdish complaints against Turkey are still pending before the European Court. The Committee noted that there had been "no significant improvement" and urged the Turkish authorities to take "urgent measures" to end acts of torture, destruction, extrajudicial executions, and enforced disappearances. As of this date, the European Court of Human

Rights has been seized of 9,979 applications involving Turkey. The President of the Committee of Ministers, Halldor Asgrimsson, called on Turkey to comply with the Court's rulings, reminding Ankara that its judgments are legally binding. "Turkey must also honour its responsibilities," declared Mr. Asgrimsson. Unlike other countries, the vast majority of cases against Turkey are political in nature – involving unfair trials, violations of freedom of thought and association, the right to life, personal security, and torture. Ankara has already been ordered to pay millions of dollars in damages, yet its only concession so far has been the demilitarization of the State Security Courts – which does not change the heart of the problem, the liberticidal nature of Turkish legislation remaining fundamentally unchanged.

Convinced that Turkish-language education in schools and the influence of Turkish television would ultimately eradicate Kurdish, President Özal argued: "We should not fear liberalizing the use of Kurdish. After all, it is spoken anyway. Don't forget the influence of television – it's an enormous pressure. Kurdish will soon be forgotten. And because of the different dialects, even Kurds can't all understand each other in one language. They use Turkish. Abdullah Öcalan himself uses Turkish for his propaganda because of these differences." When some ministers protested, claiming Kurdish was not even a real language, Özal replied: "What matters is that the ban be lifted. Just list the language and its dialects in the draft. (...) The new generation speaks Turkish. In time, Kurdish will be forgotten."

In the end, no decision was reached at the end of this stormy council meeting. Later, while hospitalized in Houston, Turgut Özal decided to ask the prominent Kurdish writer Yaşar Kemal to prepare a report on the Kurdish question. The very next day, Yaşar Kemal sent him a handwritten report. Following this, Kurds were allowed to speak their language privately, but the Kurdish language remained banned in administration, education, and the media.

PRESIDENT TURGUT ÖZAL BELIEVED TURKISH TELEVISION WOULD MAKE KURDS FORGET THEIR MOTHER TONGUE

In an article published on June 19, 1999, journalist Orhan Tokatli of the Turkish daily *Milliyet* reported on the Council of Ministers meeting held on February 22,

1991, presided over by Turgut Özal, to discuss a draft law authorizing the use of the Kurdish language in Turkey. According to Tokatli, President Özal, who initiated the proposal, assured the ministers that "the

ANKARA: THE NEW CABINET CONFIRMS TURKEY'S NATIONALIST TURN

The formation, on May 28, of a coalition government bringing together the neo-fascist Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Democratic Left Party (DSP) – a “left-wing” nationalist party – with the addition of the conservative Motherland Party (ANAP), confirms the nationalist retreat of a Turkey clinging to its myths of the past and to a rigid, hardline Kemalism.

The MHP holds as many ministerial portfolios (12) – including those of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence – as the DSP of Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, who retains the “sensitive” ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and National Education in order to present a more acceptable image of the government abroad.

The ANAP will control ten ministries, including Interior and Finance, to reassure economic circles. This party had

already secured the presidency of the National Assembly, when, on May 20, its candidate Yıldırım Akbulut was elected with 332 votes to 191. Ecevit reportedly showed “firmness” to ensure that this symbolic and strategic position – keenly sought after by the MHP – went instead to a less extremist figure.

Presented by the Turkish media as “one of the most powerful coalitions in Turkey’s history,” this cabinet, the product of a so-called “historic compromise,” claims to be committed to long-term governance for a five-year term. With a comfortable parliamentary majority, it was expected to be ratified by the Turkish Parliament that same week. Aside from yet another “repentance law”, the coalition protocol contains no provision whatsoever for addressing the Kurdish issue in Turkey. The return to the ideological freeze of the 1930s now seems well under way.

authorities continue their relentless persecution of the pro-Kurdish party, even as Çelik and other Kurdish mayors have adopted a more moderate approach, seeking to “open channels of communication” with Turkish officials.

Furthermore, a telegram of solidarity sent on May 4, 1998, to the Ankara Federation Congress of HADEP has resulted in new legal proceedings before the Ankara State Security Court No. 1 against Leyla Zana and three other Kurdish deputies – Hatip Dicle, Orhan Doğan, and Selim Sadak – who have been serving 15-year prison sentences since March 1994 for offenses of opinion.

During the May 24 hearing, held in the absence of the defendants, the prosecutor requested five years in prison for Zana, Dicle, Doğan, and Sadak, accusing them of separatist propaganda in their short telegram message to the congress. The prosecutor also demanded 3 to 5 years’ imprisonment for five musicians from the group Mezopotamya, accused of singing in Kurdish during the cultural evening following the congress. These musicians, along with one organizer, were arrested and imprisoned. The trial was adjourned to a later date.

DIYARBAKIR MAYOR FERIDUN ÇELİK FACES 7.5 YEARS IN PRISON FOR STATING THAT THERE IS A WAR IN KURDISTAN

Feridun Çelik, the Kurdish mayor of Diyarbakir, elected on April 18, 1999, with 65% of the vote as a candidate of the pro-Kurdish People’s Democracy Party (HADEP), is being prosecuted before the Ankara State Security Court for declaring that there was a war in Kurdistan. In his indictment, Prosecutor Dilaver Kahveci accuses Çelik of stating during an interview with the Kurdish television channel Med-TV: “We have come this far by moving away from war. We have arrived here with joy to advance peace and give it a voice. The

slogans in favor of peace bring immense exaltation among the people.” The prosecutor charges Çelik with “claiming that there was a war in southeastern Turkey” and, under Article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code and Article 5 of the Anti-Terror Law No. 3713, is seeking a prison sentence of 4.5 to 7.5 years.

Two months before the April general elections, Feridun Çelik, then HADEP provincial chairman for Diyarbakir, had already been imprisoned by Turkish security forces. Having failed to stifle HADEP politically at its inception, the Turkish

It should also be noted that Akin Birdal, President of the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD) and Vice President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), was imprisoned on June 4, 1999, in Ankara Central Prison to serve a 10-month sentence. Birdal was convicted by the Ankara State Security Court for a speech he delivered on World Peace Day, September 1, 1996. Accompanied to prison by his family and human rights advocates, he declared: “They asked us to play the role of the three monkeys.”

The Turkish repressive machine

now even targets music stars. The trial of Ahmet Kaya, the popular singer of "authentic music," charged with "separatist propaganda", resumed on June 16, 1999, before the Istanbul State Security Court. Kaya faces 13.5 years in prison. According to the indictment filed by the Office of the Chief Prosecutor, the charges stem from two public speeches: one delivered in Berlin, Germany, in 1993 during a concert, and another on February 10, 1999, during the

award ceremony of the Turkish Magazine Journalists' Association at the Maslak Princess Hotel in Istanbul. Based on Article 169 of the Penal Code and Article 5 of the Anti-Terror Law No. 3713, the prosecution seeks 4.5 to 7.5 years' imprisonment for "supporting an illegal organization", and 2 to 6 years under Article 312 of the Penal Code for "inciting hatred by referring to religious, linguistic, and ethnic differences."

He felt for the Kurds a sympathy mingled with admiration.

"To be is a difficult profession," he once wrote to me, "but to be Kurdish is far more difficult." Dear Ragip Duran, I have come from Switzerland, where no fewer than four languages coexist in harmony—German, French, Italian, and Romansh—to present you with the Nouredine Zaza Prize.

I am not unaware of the reality of your country, nor of what it costs those who contradict official ideology – this anachronism called Kemalism.

You could, like most of your colleagues, have allowed yourself to be anesthetized by government propaganda. But you had the courage not to remain silent. As Nouredine Zaza used to say, silence can kill.

Indeed, he himself only narrowly escaped death in Damascus, where he had founded the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria (PKKS), thanks to international petitions. Thus, you did not keep silent. And for that, you spent seven and a half months in prison – seven times thirty days and thirty nights...

Having shared seventeen years with Nouredine Zaza, I have some idea of what the hell of prison means.

More than twenty years after the torture he endured in Syrian prisons, my husband still bore its aftereffects – shoulder pains from a hundred lashes with an ox nerve whip, and recurrent nightmares where his torturer from the Damascus prison would appear shouting:

So, after all this time, dirty Kurd, you haven't become an Arab yet? No – nor a Turk.

Dear Ragip Duran, I learned much from Nouredine Zaza – about living with suffering, and living alongside the infinite, unending Kurdish tragedy.

PARIS: THE NOUREDDINE ZAZA PRIZE AWARDED TO RAGIP DURAN

The 1999 Nouredine Zaza Prize – the tenth since its creation in 1989 – was awarded to Ragip Duran, Turkish correspondent in Turkey for the French daily *Libération*.

Created in 1989 by the family of Nouredine Zaza, together with the Kurdish Institute of Paris, the prize was established "to encourage journalists not to forget this people so long neglected by history." Each year, it is awarded to a journalist from the Francophone press who, through talent and perseverance, has raised public awareness of the Kurdish cause.

It also aims to honor the memory of Nouredine Zaza, writer, political figure, and co-founder of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, who recounted his struggle in *My Kurdish Life (Ma vie de Kurde)* (Labor et Fidès). Following recipients such as Antoine Bosshard (*Journal de Genève*), Bernard Langlois (*Politis*), Marc Kravetz (*Libération*), Jean Gueyras (*Le Monde*), Jean-Claude Bühner (*Coopération*), Chris Kutschera, independent journalist and author of several works on the Kurds, Alain Campiotti (*L'Hebdo*), Philippe Dumartheray (*24 Heures*), and Michel Verrier (*Le Monde diplomatique*), the 1999

Nouredine Zaza Prize was awarded to Ragip Duran –columnist, writer, and Turkish academic – *Libération's* correspondent in Turkey (writing under the pseudonym Musa Akdemir), who had just spent seven and a half months in Turkish prisons for his courageous reporting on the war in Kurdistan.

The award ceremony took place on May 18 in Paris, at the *Forum des Images*, during an evening jointly organized by the SCAM (Société civile des auteurs multimédia) and the Kurdish Institute of Paris, attended by several hundred guests.

he prize was presented to Ragip Duran by Mrs. Gilberte Favre-Zaza.

Excerpts from her speech:

"The chain of friendship circles the world."

These words are from Claude Roy, the humanist writer attuned to the songs of birds and the breath of the world.

He, who had been a friend to Paul Éluard and Nazim Hikmet, passed away eighteen months ago. He was among those who denounced violations of human rights wherever they were committed on our planet.

Let me recall a few markers:

He was three years old when his childhood nights, once filled with his mother's stories, were shattered by the screams of tortured Kurds in his neighborhood in Maden.

- *He was five and a half when his father and elder brother Nafez were imprisoned for "Kurdish nationalism."*
- *He was ten when he had to leave Turkish Kurdistan, torn from his family, to begin a life of exile in Syria. At that time, it was said: there is no future for Kurds in Turkey.*
- *He was dying of cancer in Lausanne when images of Halabja flashed on television – 5,000 civilians gassed in global silence.*
- *And today, more than ten years after his death, his autobiography, translated into Turkish, remains banned in Turkey.*

"What have we done to God," this Kurdish father asked me, "to deserve Saddam's bombs in the south and Turkey's bombs in the north? How is it that, while humanity travels to the moon, no one on earth cares about us? Are we not human beings too, we Kurds?"

You will forgive me if, more than ten years after my husband's death, half of my heart remains Kurdish, even as it stays open to all suffering.

In sharing those years with Nouredine Zaza, I also witnessed his total absence of resentment toward those who had made him suffer—and toward humanity. He was in solidarity with all human suffering: Tibetans, Cambodians, Jews, Armenians, Palestinians... He always stood on the side of the oppressed.

"As long as human beings continue

to be trampled and persecuted across the world," he wrote in conclusion to his autobiography, "we cannot dream of better days. (...)"

When you return to Turkey, thank the democrats of your country on our behalf.

To the others, tell them that Turks and Kurds, Asians and Europeans, we are all part of the same people – the human people.

Tell them that violence is always suicidal. Tell them that if we wish to survive, we have no choice: we are condemned to peace. And peace is built through dialogue.

Tell them that we have all had enough of suffering. That Kurdish mothers are imprisoned today – I think of Leyla Zana – who wish only to see their children grow, and children who long to embrace their fathers.

You are the first Turkish journalist to receive the Nouredine Zaza Prize. I sincerely hope you will not be the last.

"From bad days to better days, men will carry men," wrote your compatriot Nazim Hikmet.

With him, and with you, despite everything, we keep faith – in the future of humanity, and in that of the Kurdish people.

Excerpt from Ragip Duran's acceptance speech:

"A little over a century ago, the first Kurdish newspaper – fittingly titled Kurdistan – was published, unfortunately not in Kurdistan, but in Cairo. Its founder, owner, editor-in-chief, columnist, accountant, and distributor, Mikhdad Bedirhan, had at least taken the first step toward realizing the dream expressed three centuries earlier by Ehmedê Xani: 'The Kurds too desired their own Sultan, their own Prince, their own administration, their own

State, rather than being ruled – that is, oppressed – by Turks, Persians, or Arabs.'...

A newspaper is a collective voice. It receives and disseminates information and ideas... Through writing, through print, we can organize debate. A newspaper is, in a sense, a temple of daily political, cultural, and social reflection – the intellect, the memory, the guide for the near future. The poet Haji Qadirî Koyî, in The Land of Bohtan to Cezire, wrote: 'Hundreds of epistles and odes are worthless now – newspapers and journals hold more value and dignity.' He probably did not foresee the ferocity of the Roum authorities against the Kurdish press... A century later, the Kurds now have their own daily, weekly, and monthly media, as well as radio stations and television channels, local, regional, and even transnational. A newspaper is like a living being, a man, a woman – it has scent, colour, moods, and character. Inevitably, Kurdish newspapers resemble the Kurds: sad but defiant, in exile but written in Kurdish, brutally repressed yet persevering, intelligent but deeply emotional, young but already wise from experience... Given the oppression weighing on Kurdish media, the mere fact that some Kurdish dailies still appear in Istanbul is, I believe, a good sign.

I have been, and remain, part of this torn and battered Kurdish press – banned, censored, destroyed, wounded. Unfortunately, we are in this situation of learning through suffering. Why does Ankara, as the Susurluk report showed, strike so lethally against the Kurdish press? Why do the police, army, gendarmerie, and special forces kill our correspondents and columnists, even 10–15-year-old children, hacked to death while selling our papers in the streets of Diyarbakir? Why have Turkish courts, since 1925, condemned everyone who defends Kurdish reality? The answer, in my view, is quite simple: They fear reality. They fear those who reveal it. They believe they can

silence truth with bullets. They don't know that batons cannot erase truth, and guns cannot distort facts. Our weapons – our pens, cameras, microphones, and computers – are stronger than their bombers and tanks. Musa Anter, to whom I owe much, once said it clearly: "The sword can cut the pen, but it cannot erase what the pen has written. Yet the pen can neutralize the sword".

Let me also speak of our weaknesses: we Kurds sometimes confuse 'England with a potato' ("Angleterre with pomme-de-terre")! – video-conference monologues on screen instead of television, letters between political leaders or militants instead of journalism, political-ideological activism instead of professional reporting... This childish ailment will surely heal

once we fully understand the journalistic and political vision of the Bedirhan, Khoyboun, and [people like] Şerif Pasha. Our past must be united with today's and future political and professional needs. Finally, Mrs. Favre-Zaza, Mr. President of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, dear colleagues and friends – I am truly honoured to receive the Nouredine Zaza Prize. I hope and believe that, in the near future, other colleagues – from Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Russia, whatever their nationality – will also receive this Prize. And I am certain that one day, if we can hold the Zaza Prize ceremony in Maden, the birthplace of the man who brings us together here today, then he will be the happiest Kurd on earth. Thank you once again!"

press claimed she was engaged in jihad, quoting remarks she reportedly made at a congress of the Palestinian Islamic Union, based in the United States, in 1997, where she allegedly said she had "chosen politics as the field of activity for my jihad."

A coordinated media campaign, orchestrated by the political police, then revealed that Ms. Kavakçı had obtained American citizenship during her stay in the United States. This forced the young MP to resign her mandate, thereby bringing the crisis with the Islamist MPs to an end.

• **SEVEN IRANIAN KURDISH STUDENTS EXECUTED BY TURKISH SOLDIERS.** Seven Iranian Kurds from the village of Zargheh, near the Turkish border and aged between 13 and 25, were arrested on 6 May 1999 by Turkish security forces and immediately summarily executed. The victims, all students on school holidays, had gone to the village of Katuna in Turkey for trade, and to visit part of their families living there.

Nearly 5,000 people from the Margavar region in Iranian Kurdistan took part in the funeral on 8 May 1999. They called on the Iranian authorities to do everything possible to clarify the affair and punish the perpetrators of the crime.

• **MRS. ECEVIT SHARPLY ATTACKS THE MHP AND EXPRESSES DOUBTS ABOUT FORMING A COALITION WITH THIS PARTY.** Regarded as the founder and co-president of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), the wife of the Turkish Prime Minister, in an interview with the daily *Milliyet* on 15 May, dropped a large stone into the Turkish political pond by recalling the unsavoury past of the National Action Party (MHP). Excerpts: "One day we saw people emerge saying: 'We are Turks born from the mating

AND ALSO...

• **TURKISH ODDITIES: STORM OVER A HEADSCARF.** The opening session on 2 May 1999 of the newly elected Turkish Parliament was severely disrupted by Ms. Merve Kavakçı, an Islamist MP from the Virtue Party, who entered the Turkish National Assembly with her head covered by a headscarf. Booed by hundreds of MPs, particularly those from Bülent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (DSP), who shouted "Out, out!" while clapping their hands, the MP was forced to leave the chamber, prompting a suspension of the sitting during which each MP renewed their pledge of allegiance to "the secular Republic" and "the principles and reforms of Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk." Beside himself, Bülent Ecevit asked one of the presiding officers, "I beg you, put that woman in her place," adding, "No one should interfere in people's private lives, but this is not a private place. We are here in the very foundations of the State... This is not the place to challenge the State."

Turkish President Süleyman Demirel, on 5 May 1999, indirectly warned against a possible army intervention in the crisis. "If she takes the oath, this will provoke a reaction... I can't say more", he declared. There is no doubt he was referring to the Turkish army, which sees itself as the guardian of the State's secular order. The National Security Council, the country's real executive body, which had ousted Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist government on 28 February 1997, had, on 1 May, warned the MP against any attempt to appear with a headscarf at the inaugural session of Parliament. The crisis also divided the Islamist party itself: its president Recai Kutan stated on 4 May that his party would go "all the way" in this affair, while the party's vice-president, Aydın Menderes, resigned from his party on 6 May.

The Turkish judiciary opened an investigation against the MP for "incitement to racial and religious hatred", based on Article 312 of the Penal Code. The Turkish

of a Turk and a she-wolf called Asena, and therefore it is our duty to safeguard the last Turkish state (Turkey).’ They created associations and parties based on this claim. They organised children and young people, put pressure on them, and even armed them. ‘You will be with us or dead,’ they told them. For years they harmed countless people and killed many. Is it easy to forget the harm they have done? Those who claim ‘We descend from the she-wolf Asena, we came here from Central Asia, sovereignty over this country is our right’ and who try to do politics, moreover by brute force, cannot be considered a ‘party’ in the democratic sense of the word in this country, nor can they strengthen nationalist unity (...). Furthermore, they used violence not only to organise themselves politically, but also for material interests; they became intertwined with mafias and gangs.”

After this unsparing reminder of the MHP’s past and nature, Mrs. Rahşan Ecevit expressed scepticism about any evolution of this party towards moderation. “Since the possibility of a government with the MHP has been raised, some optimistic circles claim that this party has now changed. Should we believe those who think this,

or believe the party leaders themselves who say, ‘We have not changed’? I cannot say.” Throughout the interview, Mrs. Ecevit appears less than enthusiastic about seeing her party join the MHP in a governing coalition.

• **THE TURKISH ARMY IS SAID TO HAVE USED CHEMICAL WEAPONS AGAINST THE PKK.** An internal document stamped “top secret,” dated 27 February 1986, from the Turkish Land Forces, orders the production and use of toxic gases against the Kurdish insurgency. “If necessary, poisonous insects may be specially bred to be used against the terrorists”, the text states in particular. Since then, numerous suspicious cases had been reported without attracting media attention or giving rise to any investigation.

The pro-Kurdish daily *Özgür Politika* has just published, in its 26 May 1999 issue, a list of 17 Kurdish fighters allegedly killed by Turkish security forces using chemical weapons on 11 May 1999 in the village of Ballıkaya, district of Silopi, province of Şırnak. The newspaper provides a detailed description of bomb fragments bearing the English inscription: “*The transport of this weapon is prohibited under military law.*”

•PHONE-TAPPING SCANDAL: TURKEY’S BIGGEST CRIMINALS LINKED TO THE HIGHEST AUTHORITIES.

A new politico-mafioso scandal is shaking Turkey after wiretaps by the security services revealed that the country’s highest authorities were in regular contact with mafia bosses and criminals wanted by the police. Drawing on these wiretaps, the Turkish daily *Milliyet*, in an article on 7 June 1999, published the list of recipients of some of the calls made by big drug traffickers who are also involved in political crimes.

The wiretaps showed that Yeşil, better known as “the Terminator,” organiser of the assassination of several dozen Kurdish intellectuals, including MP Mehmet Sincar, a hitman for the Turkish intelligence services and on the run since the Susurluk scandal, made several phone calls to the Presidency of the Republic, the Prime Minister’s office, the intelligence services attached to the Presidency, the General Secretariat of the National Security Council, the General Directorate of the Gendarmerie, the Ankara division of the Gendarmerie Command, the police headquarters of Kocaeli and Izmir, the War Academy command, and the intelligence bureau of the General Directorate of Security.

According to the same wiretaps, Kurşat Yılmaz, one of the biggest mafia bosses, who escaped twice from Turkish prisons, contacted the Presidency, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, the National Security Directorate, and the Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

While the authorities questioned on the affair denounce a “scandal” centred on the phone-tapping of high-ranking officials – from the President to

• **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN TURKEY IN APRIL 1999.** The Turkish Human Rights Association (İHD) has released its report on human rights violations for April 1999. The figures are as follows:

• Unsolved murders:	15
• Number of extrajudicial executions, deaths undertorture or in custody:	24
• Number of disappearances:	1
• Number of people tortured:	44
• Number of people taken into custody:	7,078
• Number of press outlets and political parties banned:	21
• Number of publications seized or banned:	19
• Number of people imprisoned for opinion offences:	148

the Prime Minister – other voices are raising the real question: why and how are these criminals in contact with the highest Turkish authorities?

For now, the only people being targeted are the police officers in charge of the wiretaps: the Ankara Police Chief Cevdet Saral and his deputy Osman Ak were dismissed on 8 June 1999, along with the division chief, the head of the intelligence and security bureau, a deputy director, three commissioners, and three police officers. The Turkish authorities show no

inclination to launch any “clean-hands” operation despite the extent and seriousness of the scandals shaking the country.

•TURKISH TOURISM: ALREADY 4.5 BILLION DOLLARS IN LOSSES. Tourism, one of Turkey’s key sectors, with over 10 billion dollars in direct revenues in 1998 and supporting 34 other sub-sectors, is in serious difficulty this year. Since the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, the sector has already recorded 4.5 billion dollars in losses, 600 tourist establishments are on the

brink of bankruptcy, and 50,000 workers have been laid off. According to the daily *Sabah* of 10 June 1999, which provides these figures, companies can no longer meet their loan repayments, and industry leaders announce that this year the sector will reach only 6.5 billion dollars.

Despite rock-bottom prices, the sector is unable to recover. Beyond the risk of attacks, it is Turkey’s **image** that has been badly tarnished in the eyes of the 10 million tourists who travelled there in previous years.

• HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR MAY 1999 ACCORDING TO MAZLUM-DER. Mazlum-Der, a Turkish human rights association close to Islamist circles, has published its report on human rights violations for May 1999. The figures are as follows:

• Number of unsolved murders:	10
• Number of executions and deaths resulting from torture:	9
• Number of deaths in combat:	266
• Number of people wounded in combat:	147
• Number of kidnappings:	2
• Number of disappearances:	4
• Number of people tortured:	77
• Number of people raped or sexually abused:	2
• Number of people taken into custody:	2,100
• Number of arrests:	248
• Number of villages evacuated or burned:	7
Number of prisoners of conscience:	134
• Number of publications banned:	24
• Number of journalists taken into custody:	5

The association **Mazlum-Der** is currently being prosecuted for “separatist and Islamist activities.”

• ON A VISIT TO TURKEY, GEORGE SOROS, RENOWNED INTERNATIONAL FINANCIER, ADVISES TURKS TO SOLVE THE KURDISH PROBLEM BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE.

George Soros, one of the world’s leading financiers, declared on 20 June 1999, during a conference in Istanbul at which he was speaking, that “Turkey must resolve the Kurdish question for Europe.” Asked why Turkey, unlike the Eastern European states, was not among the selected candidates for entry into the European Union, Mr. Soros said that Turkey must first find a cultural solution to the Kurdish problem. He went on: “Between the European Union and Turkey stands the Kurdish question, which poses a problem. If it is not resolved now, it seems it will grow even more serious. As you know, the European Union has had some experience in Kosovo. I am not pessimistic about the prospects of a solution to the question. I see that attempts are being made to resolve it. The terrorist movement has not been wiped out, but it has been dealt a serious blow. The leader of the movement is now facing justice. That can create an opportunity. A situation in which Kurds can live out their cultural heritage could be a solution to the question. That is, in any case, the opinion of an outside observer looking at Turkey.”

• **TURKISH PARLIAMENT EXTENDS MANDATE OF "NORTHERN WATCH" INTERNATIONAL FORCE FOR SIX MONTHS.** On 23 June 1999, the Turkish Parliament extended for six months – until 31 December 1999 – the mandate

of the "Northern Watch" international force deployed at the Turkish air base of Incirlik. This force, created in December 1996 to replace the US–French–British multinational force "Provide Comfort", is tasked with protecting the Kurds of

Iraq from Saddam Hussein's regime and monitoring the no-fly zone imposed north of the 36th parallel since the end of the Gulf War. The Turkish Assembly renews the mandate of this force every six months.
