

# THE MOUNTAINS ARE CLOSER TO US THAN WE THINK

INTERVIEWS WITH 3 INTERNATIONAL GUERRILLA FIGHTERS IN THE FREE MOUNTAINS OF KURDISTAN







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## **IMPRESSUM:**

Internationalist Commune of Rojava

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**IF I HAD KNOWN BEFORE HOW THE LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS IS LIKE. I THINK I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BRING A LOT OF PEOPLE WITH ME. ONE SITS HERE AND KNOWS: WE ARE TAKING STEPS HERE THAT ARE AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS AND THE PROBLEMS THAT THOUSANDS FEEL EXPOSED TO.**

**W**ith the historic resistance of Kobanê and the fight against ISIS, the revolution in Rojava became known to many young people who began to see it as a hope for a real alternative to capitalism. The basis for what has developed in Rojava since 2012 are the ideas of Abdullah Öcalan<sup>1</sup> and the PKK's struggle for freedom. Their guiding principles offered a way to live a principled life and fight for what is right.

Today many internationals from around the world have joined the guerilla forces to fight in the Free Mountains of Kurdistan. There, our friends<sup>2</sup> are finding what many young people are searching for today.

## **THE PKK AND THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN KURDISTAN**

According to Abdullah Öcalan, also known as Rêber Apo the main obstacle to the development of a socialist society and militants who can organize the revolution lies in the mentality we have developed under the influence of the ideology of the capitalist system, namely liberalism. Only by changing the

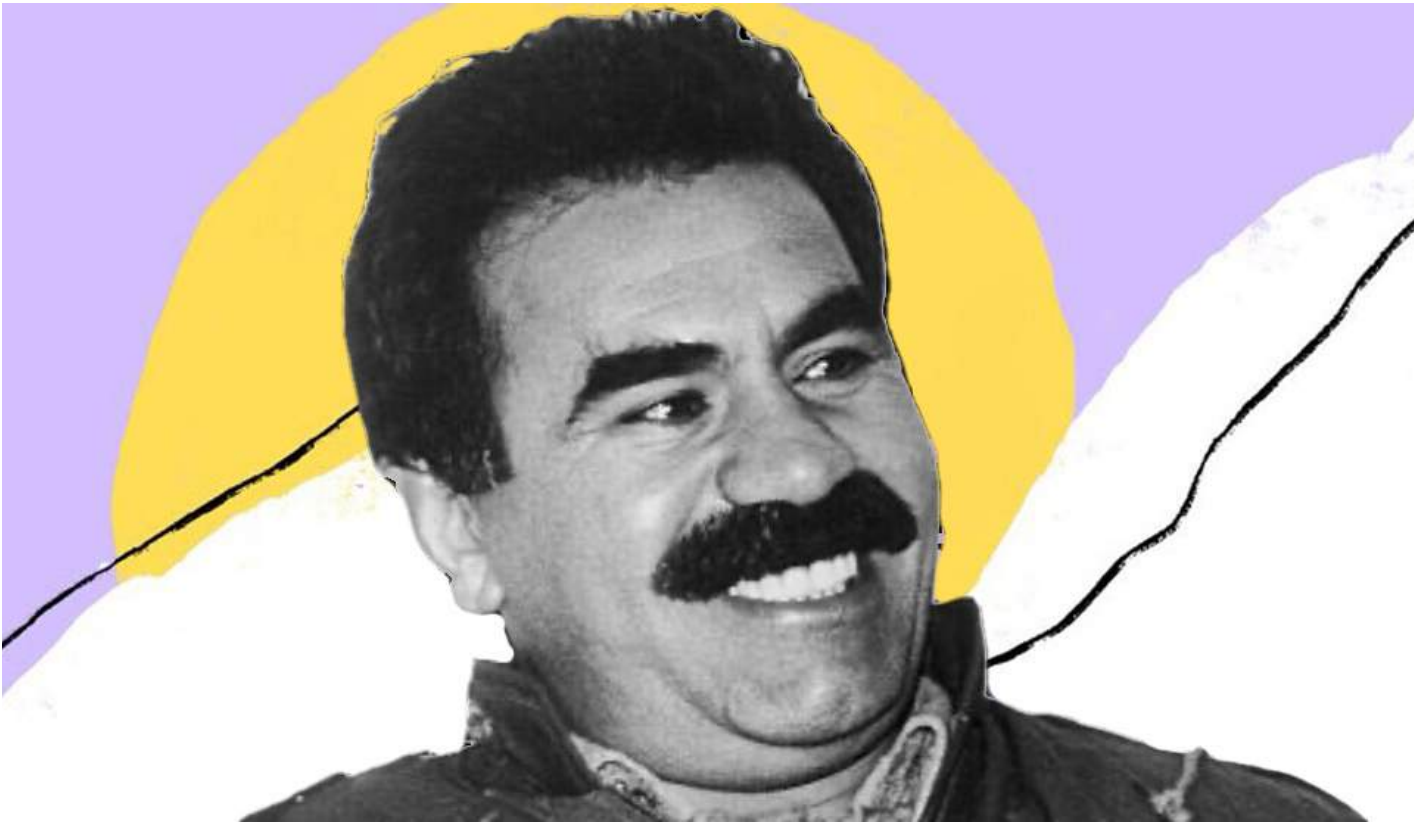


mentality and overcoming individualism, egoism, oppression and domination, can we create a free life. In their interviews, the internationalists<sup>3</sup> speak about how they experienced these changes in their daily life and struggle. But first let us see where this movement came from, how it started the armed struggle and what is the essence of its ideology, program and strategy.

<sup>1</sup> More on Abdullah Öcalan: <https://internationalistcommune.com/brochure-on-my-prison-life-on-imralli-island/>

<sup>2</sup> The Kurdish term "Heval" is translated as "friends". It is used in the Kurdish Freedom Movement to refer to comrades

<sup>3</sup> The PKK is itself Internationalist but the term is often used to refer to comrades that are not from the region



## **FOUNDING OF THE PKK AND ABDULLAH ÖCALAN'S NEW PARADIGM**

To better understand why internationals are joining the PKK, and the Kurdish freedom movement in general, we have to look at the history of the party, the ideas it is based on and how it is struggling to put them into practice.

The movement that laid the groundwork for the revolutionary process in Rojava began with a group of students and youth in Ankara around Abdullah Öcalan. Influenced by the Turkish left and the 1968 revolution, Öcalan developed a perspective for the Kurdish liberation struggle. His words, "Kurdistan is a colony," were groundbreaking. In a situation where Kurds faced cultural genocide, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries around Öcalan, often called Apo (short for Abdullah), managed to create a mass movement in the previously hopeless Kurdish

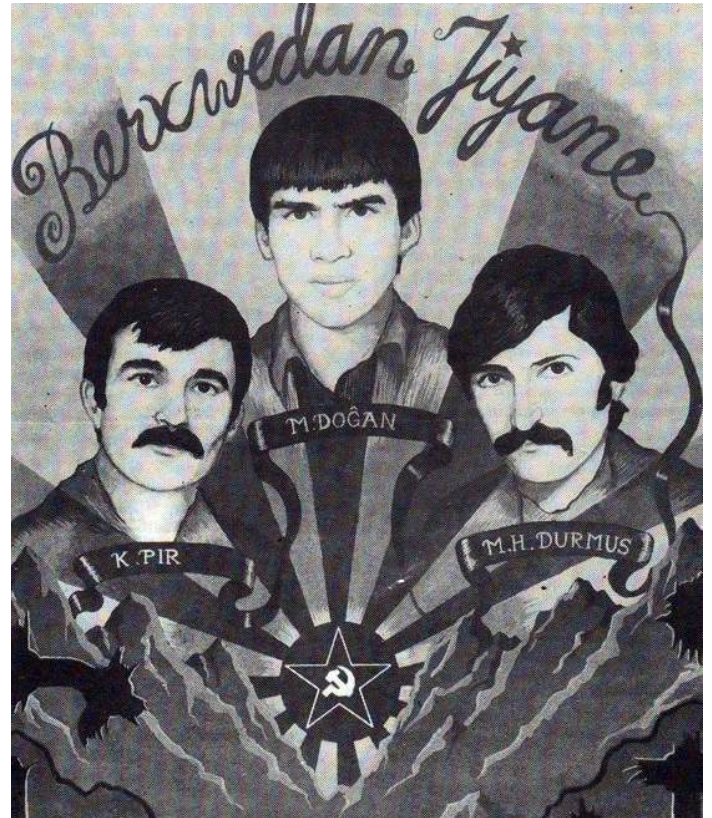
society. Among them were not only Kurds but also Turks and Laz. The Internationalist character was a essential from day one and internationalist revolutionaries played a key role in the movement. Hakî Karer, a Turk from the black Sea coast and one of Abdullah Öcalan's closest friends during the early days was murdered by members of Sterka Sor a Organization of Kurdish collaborators working with the Turkish state in 1977. One year later the young revolutionaries around Öcalan founded the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a revenge for the killing of Hakî Karer. From this day on the martyrdom of leading friends always became the reason for important milestones in the history of the party. The original party line, leaning on Marxism-Leninism, was constantly discussed and questioned, especially during the fall of the Soviet Union. Öcalan developed a radical criticism of the state, from analyses of the short comings of Real-Socialism and national liberation struggles.

On this basis he introduced a new paradigm and a form of organization of society called Democratic Confederalism, which emphasizes bottom-up radical democracy, women's liberation, ecology & diversity. Öcalan's analysis on the roots of the state, power, and violence, defines the state as the result of men conspiring against the millennia-old matriarchal society. This explains why the focus on women's freedom is essential for the development of a free society and the right relationship with nature.

The question on how to implement and defend the new paradigm brings us to the history of the armed struggle in Kurdistan.

## **HISTORY OF THE PKK'S ARMED STRUGGLE: FROM THE PRISON RESISTANCE TO THE FIRST BULLET**

The founding of the PKK was announced through a militant action that targeted collaborating Kurdish feudal landlords, gaining the young movement a lot of praise especially among the people who had suffered under their rule. The first real military action would later open the path for creating a mass movement. In 1979, Öcalan warned his comrades, and other leftist groups in Turkey at that time, that forces in the Turkish military were preparing a takeover of the state. He and a few hundred cadre of the PKK managed to make their way to Lebanon before the military coup overthrew the government just one year later. In Lebanon, the party prepared their return to Turkey in camps

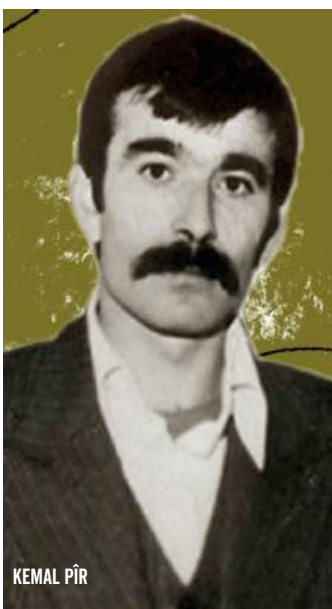


provided through relations Öcalan built with Palestinian revolutionaries. After the military coup on September 12, hundreds of cadres of the PKK who had stayed in Turkey were arrested, as well as hundreds of others from across the Turkish left. They were facing torture and humiliation on a daily basis in the dungeons of the Turkish state.

Against the brutal torture and the mock trials Mazlum Dogan set his prison cell on fire and hangs himself on March 21st 1982, the day of the Kurdish Newroz holiday. On the wall of his cell he'd written the words "Berxwedan Jiyane", "Resistance is Life". His stance and this slogan became the spirit of the prison resistance, and how the PKK understands struggle today. On 14 July 1982, while attending one of the mock trials out of the prison, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, member of the PKK's central committee and leading figure in the prison resistance, insistently asked to speak at the court. When he was allowed to speak, he said: "I speak in

the name of the struggle for freedom. As a freedom fighter of my people, in order to protest your savage practices, I am starting a death fast from now on." Five others in the court room declared immediately that they are joining him in the death fast. In the following days, their numbers increased and the Great Death Fast Resistance brought the systematic torture regime down to its knees. The resistance action of Mazlum Doğan turned into a prison-wide organized resistance when Mehmet Hayri Durmuş & Kemal Pîr entered death fast and others joined them. Kemal Pîr, a leading cadre of the PKK, with Turkish roots, was intensely targeted by the Turkish government during the death fast, as the state feared the influence of the Turkish revolutionary on the relations between Kurds and Turks. Despite a lot of attempts to break his will, Kemal Pîr did not back down and played a leading role in the death fast: shortly before he became a martyr, he described how they approached life and death in this beautiful way:

**"WE LOVE LIFE SO MUCH THAT WE ARE READY TO DIE FOR IT."**



In the court room, when he announced the death fast, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş ended his speech with the following words: "Those who say they will fight for this people must base their fight on armed struggle. Without an armed resistance, colonialism can never be defeated." The first military action and the start of the armed struggle in Kurdistan was launched on 15th August, 3 groups that had seen ideological education by Öcalan and military education with support of the Palestinian Revolutionaries in Lebanon's Beka valley entered Northern Kurdistan and attacked Turkish police and military outposts in Dihê (Turkish: Eruh) and Şemzînan. One of the leading cadres in the actions of the 15th of August was Mahsum Korkmaz, codename Egîd. He would become the ideal of a commander. After his Martyrdom in 1986 the parties central military academy was named after him.

The successful armed propaganda actions might have not been very significant in military terms but the implications were like an earthquake. Sarî Huseyîn<sup>4</sup>, who took part in the first actions points out to the fact that everyone that had doubted the PKK's ability to take on the fascist Turkish state was proven wrong: "Before that we had two different lines and we didn't agree. But after August 15th, everyone agreed and we could do anything we wanted. In our revolutionary history, August 15th was a very very important step. Before that, we had suffered a lot and August 15th meant that this suffering was not pointless. It proved that the PKK line and ideology is correct."



## **“ROJA VEJÎNÊ”: THE DAY OF REBIRTH**

**THE FIRST BULLETS THAT WERE SHOT AT THE OCCUPIERS DID NOT ONLY DESTROY THE OCCUPYING FORCES BUT AT THE SAME TIME SHATTERED THE COLONIZED MENTALITY OF THE KURDISH PEOPLE. THAT IS WHY IN THE KURDISTAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT IT IS REFERRED TO AS THE DAY OF REBIRTH OF THE KURDISH PEOPLE (“ROJA VEJÎNÊ”). IT ALSO MARKED THE START OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE, THE GUERRILLA AND THE FOUNDATION HRK, THE LIBERATION FORCES OF KURDISTAN, WHICH WOULD LATER BECOME THE ARGK, THE LIBERATION ARMY OF KURDISTAN. THE ARGK WOULD LATER TURN INTO THE HPG, THE PEOPLE’S DEFENCE FORCES AND THE YJA-STAR, THE UNITS OF THE FREE WOMEN. UNTIL TODAY THEY ARE RESISTING TURKISH OCCUPATION AND THE EFFORTS OF THE GLOBAL HEGEMONIC FORCES TO DESTROY THE KURDISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND WITH IT A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALIST MODERNITY.**

# CHRONOLOGY

**1978** ON NOVEMBER 27 THE KURDISTAN WORKERS' (PKK) IS FOUNDED IN THE VILLAGE OF AMARA, LICE DISTRICT, TURKEY

**1970** ON JULY 2, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE COMING MILITARY COUP IN TURKEY ABDULLAH ÖCALAN LEAVES NORTHERN KURDISTAN FOR SYRIA

**1980** MILITARY COUP IN TURKEY ON SEPTEMBER 12. THOUSANDS OF SYMPATHIZERS AND MANY OF THE LEADING CADRES OF THE PKK GET IMPRISONED

**1982** ON MARCH 21, MAZLUM DOGAN SETS HIS CELL IN THE DIYARBEKIR PRISION ON FIRE & HANGS HIMSELF AS FORM OF RESISTANCE. THE SLOGAN HE LEFT ON THE WALL OF HIS CELL "BERXWEDAN JIYAN E" (RESISTANCE IS LIFE) BECOMES THE SPIRIT OF THE PRISON RESISTANCE

**MAY 17** FERHAT KURTAY, EŞREF ANYIK, MAHMUT ZENGİN & NECMİ ÖNER KNOWN AS "THE FOUR", RESISTED & SELF-IMMOLATED IN THE PRISON OF DIYARBEKIR

**JULY 14** START OF A MAJOR HUNGER STRIKE TO DEATH LEAD BY KEMAL PÎR, MEHMET XAYRÎ DURMUŞ & ALÎ ÇÎÇEK

BERXWEDAN JIYAN E

# RESISTANCE IS LIFE

**1984** ON AUGUST 15 THE ARMED STRUGGLE IS DECLARED BY ACTIONS AGAINST TURKISH MILITARY FORCES IN NORTHERN KURDISTAN (KURDISH: BAKÛR)

**1984** FOUNDING OF THE “LIBERATION FORCES OF KURDISTAN” (HRK; HÊZÊN RIZGARIYA KURDISTAN)

**1985** FOUNDING OF THE KURDISH NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (ERNK; ENÎYA RIZGARIYA NETEWÎ YA KURDISTAN) AS THE POLITICAL FRONT ORGANIZATION OF THE PKK ON MARCH 21

**1993** FIRST AUTONOMOUS WOMEN’S UNITS WITHIN THE GUERRILLA FORCES ARE ESTABLISHED, INTRODUCING A WOMEN’S ARMY

**1996** INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY STARTS WITH A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON ABDULLAH ÖCALAN IN DAMASCUS ON MAY 6

**1996** SELF-SACRIFICE ACTION OF ŞEHÎD ZÎLAN (ZEYNEP KINACI) ON JUNE 30 AS AN ANSWER TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PKK

**1998** ABDULLAH ÖCALAN LEAVES SYRIA ON OCTOBER 9

**1999** ABDULLAH ÖCALAN GETS KIDNAPPED ON FEBRUARY 15 UNDER PARTICIPATION OF TURKISH, US AND ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE AS PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY

**2000** ACCORDING TO THE NEW STRATEGY THE ARGK IS RESTRUCTURED UNDER THE NAME OF HPG, PEOPLE'S DEFENSE FORCES FROM JANUARY 2 ONWARDS

**2002** ON SEPTEMBER 1, THE HPG DECLARES THE "MEDYA DEFENCE ZONES" AS LIBERATED TERRITORIES

**2004** FOUNDATION OF THE FREE WOMEN'S UNITS YJA-STAR (KURDISH: YEKÎNEYÊN JINÊN AZAD ÊN STAR)

**2014** HPG AND YJA STAR GUERILLAS DEFEND SHENGAL AGAINST ISIS

**2014** HPG AND YJA STAR GUERILLAS DEFEND KOBANÊ

**2016** FOUNDATION OF THE KCK, KURDISTAN DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITIES UNION, THE UMBRELLA ORGANISATION FOR DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATION IN KURDISTAN

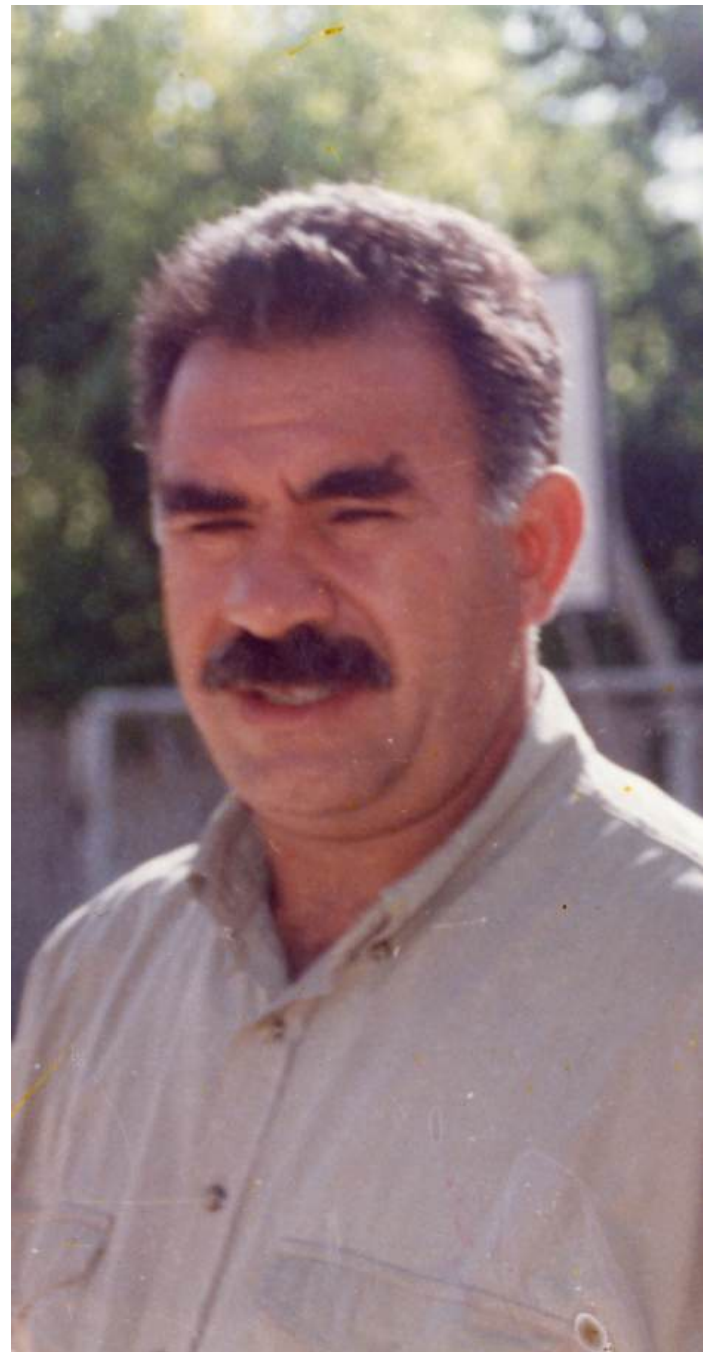
**2024** LARGEST MILITARY OPERATION TO DATE LAUNCHED BY TURKEY IN MÊTINA, ZAP AND AVAŞÎN (MEDYA DEFENCE ZONES) ON APRIL 17

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY

The PKK's successful mass mobilization, armed struggle and Abdullah Öcalan's political vision were early on recognized as a threat to the dominance of capitalist hegemony. On May 6, 1996, during the time of an ceasefire between the PKK and the Turkish state, an assassination attempt by the Turkish state's intelligence agency MIT on Abdullah Öcalan failed in Damascus.

The Turkish state threatened to go to war with Syria if they continued to tolerate Öcalan's presence in Syria. The Syrian state gave in and asked Öcalan to leave. In order to prevent war Öcalan decided to leave. He didn't choose to go to the mountains, the stronghold of the PKK, because he was aware that his presence would probably cause large scale attacks on the guerrilla camps there. Instead he choose to go to Europe and fight for a political solution of the so called Kurdish Question. All his attempts to find a peaceful solution were met with ignorance and betrayal by the European Union and European States like Germany, Italy and especially Greece. The Greek government promised him safe passage to South Africa, whose government agreed to grant him political asylum. Instead, he was sent to Kenya, where he was abducted from the Greek embassy and handed over to the Turkish state. In Turkey, he was initially sentenced to death in a mock trial but his sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. He is still being held in solitary confinement on the prison island of Imralı. In prison, where he was subjected to torture and isolation, he never gave up the fight for his people

and humanity. He developed his political thinking and with his defense writings, which he sent to the European Court of Human Rights, he developed a new paradigm for humanity and a roadmap for the freedom of the Kurdish people, the Middle East and humanity as a whole. Since 2018, he has been in complete isolation, with no contact with lawyers, visits or the ability to send or receive letters.



## AN INTERNATIONALIST MOVEMENT FROM DAY ONE

From the very beginning, the PKK was internationalist, as it was based on the universal ideas of Abdullah Öcalan. What he himself said about the revolution in Kurdistan leaves no doubt about the internationalist essence of the PKK and the Kurdish freedom movement. It is therefore not surprising that the founding members include

not only Kurds, but also Turks and Laz peoples.

Since the 1990s, countless internationals from numerous countries have also joined the Kurdish freedom movement and guerrillas or taken part in the revolution in Rojava, clearing a path for people from all over the world.



“

I AM NOT DOING THE REVOLUTION FOR KURDS AND KURDISTAN. BUT I STARTED WITH THE KURDS AND KURDISTAN. BECAUSE THEY ARE THE MOST OPPRESSED PEOPLE; THEY IMPOSED A BAN ON THEIR EXISTENCE. THEY ARE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF CRUELTY AND OPPRESSION. THAT'S WHY I STARTED THE REVOLUTION FOR THE KURDS.”

- **ABDULLAH ÖCALAN**



“When I first heard about the revolution in Rojava and slowly got to know the movement, the first question and consideration was: “Where can I find my role in it? can I find a role in at all? Can I just be a spectator from afar?” This is what was made possible largely through the work of friends who left before me: To know that we can go, we can be part of this, we can play a role.”

- Heval Baran Nûjjiyan, Portuguese HPG-Guerrilla



“From the beginning on, the Kurdish liberation movement had internationalist approaches and combined inspirations from other liberation struggles; Vietnam, Cuba and Angola with the reality of the local circumstances of Kurdistan. In the founding group of the liberation struggle there were even Turkish and Laz friends. For internationalists it is really important to understand this reality of the movement – if you are not Kurd, it does not mean that you are a stranger. If you share the Apoist ideology you are naturally a part of it.”

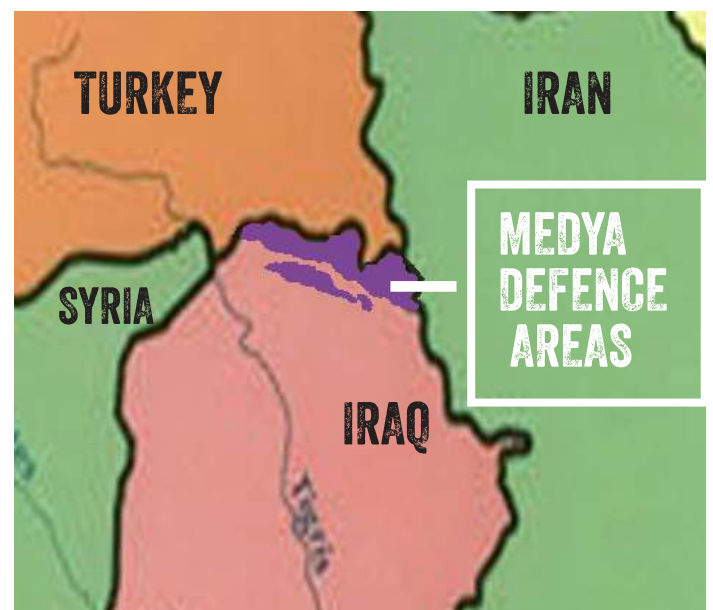
- Heval Mizgîn Xweza, German HPG Guerrilla

## THE FREE MOUNTAINS OF KURDISTAN

When we speak about the Free Mountains of Kurdistan, we are referring to the Zagros and Tauros Mountains. Since the 1990's the guerrilla had under immense hardships established liberated areas in these two mountain chains which are spread over Northern, Southern and Eastern Kurdistan (Turkey, Iraq, Iran). The territory the guerrilla controls in the Mountains of Southern Kurdistan are called "Medya Defence Areas". Their purpose is the defense of South Kurdistan against the Turkish occupation and they are an important place for education, reflection and the development of a free life. There, Revolutionaries have developed the strength to resist even the second largest NATO army (=Turkey's armed forces) on the basis of the philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan.

**“A LOT OF INTERNATIONALISTS GOT TO KNOW THEMSELVES ON THE MOUNTAINS AND DEEPENED THE CONNECTION WITH THEIR OWN LAND AS WELL.”**

**- HEVAL MIZGÎN XWEZA**



**“IN THE MOUNTAINS YOU MEET EVERY KIND OF NATION AND EVERY KIND OF LANGUAGE IS SPOKEN. THAT CONFIRMS EXACTLY WHAT IT'S ABOUT: THE DEMOCRATIC NATION, PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND THE JOINT STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM OF PEOPLE FROM THE MOST DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, WHO COME TOGETHER HERE AND, IN RESPECT OF DIFFERENCES, DEVELOP A COMMON STRENGTH, THE VALUE OF DIVERSE VIEWS.”**

**- BARAN NÛJIYAN, PORTUGUESE HPG-GUERRILLA**



## ŞEHÎD RONAÎ (ANDREA WOLF)

Ronahî, Andrea Wolf, was one of the first Internationalist that headed to the Free Mountains of Kurdistan in search of the right methods and ways of struggle. Born in Munich, she went to Kurdistan in early 1997 to join the PKK. In the mountains of Kurdistan, she took the name "Ronahi". Ronahi was chosen consciously, it was the code name of Bedriye Taş, who had set herself on fire together with Nilgun Yildirim (Berivan) in protest against the criminalization and repression of the German state and the bans on the Newroz festivities in 1994.

Andrea Wolf (Ronahi) was martyred in a clash in Van's Catak district on October 23, 1998 after she was captured alive by Turkish soldiers. She was the first foreigner, from outside of the Middle East, joining the guerrilla and the PKK and became a role model for Internationalists around the world. Today the international Academy of Jineolojî the "Andrea Wolf Institute" carries her name.



## FROM PROBLEM TO SOLUTION: IDEOLOGY OF THE PKK GUERRILLAS

The guerilla fighters in the Taurus-Zagros mountain range are the armed wing of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and so, as members, are committed to protecting, developing, and embodying the ideology of the party. An ideology with roots that emerge from deep within society, the Kurdistan freedom movement, the PKK, and the ideas of Abdullah Öcalan. Our friends in the mountains shared their thoughts with us, and so make frequent references to the ideology, practice, and way of life they are willing to defend with their lives. To understand them -- their personalities, words, feelings, motivations, and actions -- we need to understand the ideology, the concepts they reference, and the time and space that these ideas came from.

## A WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The Kurdish freedom movement analyses sexism as the root of all society's problems. Capitalism, class, patriarchy, nationalism, statism, and all oppressive structures, and therefore Capitalist Modernity as a whole, are only possible with the enslavement of women. Therefore, society will be free once women are free. This requires the dominant male mentality to be rooted out, both by destroying the patriarchal structures of society and the internalised sexist mentality within us. It is essential for this that women build and develop their own autonomous structures and organisations. Men take part in this struggle by overcoming their mentality with the

aim of becoming a free man. If men and women fight together to free our minds from sexist ways of thinking we can overcome the traditional gender roles of man and women forced on each of us. Öcalan describes this entire process as 'killing the dominant man'<sup>5</sup> inside of us. Defining sexism as the enemy we face immediately places women as vanguard force to defeat it. This is why women, and women's freedom, shape the practice and theory of the Kurdish freedom movement, as well as its own view of itself, its identity and history.

## THE PROBLEM: CAPITALIST MODERNITY

In 1978 the PKK faced a world that denied the existence of Kurdish people, so naturally the party's struggle was focused on making the Kurdish people, and "Kurdishness", undeniable. Today, this struggle has found success. With the declaration of armed struggle, and the "first bullet" of the guerilla on 15 August 1984, no one can hope to convince masses of people that Kurds do not exist. However, in 1984, the guerilla were fighting to liberate Kurdistan by establishing a state for the Kurdish nation, a nation-state with its own borders and international recognition. This aim sees the state as a tool for freedom but history has shown this to be false, with examples like real socialism in Soviet Russia and communist China. With the collapse of Soviet Russia capitalists declared the victory of capitalism. It was the "end of history"; capitalism

<sup>5</sup> "Killing and transforming the dominant men" Andrea Wolf Institute of Jineoloji Academy <https://jineoloji.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Killing-and-Transforming-the-dominant-man-booklet-en-compressed-compressed-1.pdf>

had won and had proved itself as the natural, and only, option for organising society. Many people fighting for a better world believed this narrative and many either lost hope in any alternative for humanity or questioned if socialism was still an alternative. Abdullah Öcalan defended socialism. Arguing that it was not socialism that failed but the idea that a nation-state could be socialist because of its role in the current world system.

Today we find ourselves battling to hold onto reality; we are fighting to keep our hearts, minds and souls from the control of a powerful enemy. With the ideology of liberalism, capitalism, industrialism, and nation-states can unite and work together for the pursuit of maximum profit. Together this forms a system that attempts to destroy all societies and force every human into a new way of life that serves nothing except the accumulation of wealth. It aims to colonise everything, body and soul, so that every person feels, thinks, and lives for nothing else. Öcalan calls this system Capitalist Modernity. We have no future under the system. So what is the alternative? What do we fight for if we want to survive? If we want to be free?

## **DEMOCRATIC MODERNITY**

The Kurdish freedom movement began as a national liberation movement because it fought for a nation-state. Today it is an international liberation movement, because it fights for Democratic Modernity. Democratic Modernity sits opposite Capitalist Modernity, offering an alternative method for organising society and a democratic and free life. Here, the collective consensus of all individuals,

communities, ethnic groups, and peoples within a land is what governs it. Such a collective, that embraces all ethnic groups, peoples, cultures, flags, and languages under one roof can be considered a democratic form of nationhood. The strength of the unity and solidarity between those that identify with the nation and between those who identify with other nations would reflect the democratisation of these nations and how they govern the lands they share. A land may contain peoples from many different nations but only with a democratic system of governance can nations coexist. The autonomy of all nations must be protected, allowing all nations to organise themselves, but nations must also be able to come together as a confederation and find consensus on how they want to live. Through this method of Democratic Confederation, the self-governing structures of Democratic Nations within a land organise themselves. If decisions of the confederation are to reflect the opinions, voices, and interests of all the people that they affect then every level of society must be involved in their own governance, from the individual to the global community. In this way, Democratic Modernity imagines the self-governance of human society by world-wide Democratic Nations. A future in which a free, pluralistic, and equal world based on diversity replaces monoculture and hegemony.

# 9 PILLARS OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATION

## 1. THE FREE INDIVIDUAL AND DEMOCRATIC COMMUNAL LIFE:

"The Democratic Nation's individual sees his or her freedom in the communality of society, in the form of the more functional life of small communities. A free and democratic commune or community is the main school in which the individual in a Democratic Nation takes shape."

## 2. POLITICAL LIFE AND DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMY

"Democracy can only attain meaning on the basis of the existence of an open and free society; that is, a moral and political society. Democratic society, where individuals and groups become subjects, corresponds with a form of governance that most effectively develops moral and political society."

## 3. SOCIAL LIFE

"First and foremost, we must forge strong human relationships based on a common understanding and the building of society."

## 4. HEVJIYANA AZAD (FREE PARTNERSHIPS)

"Hevjyana Azad" is a proposal for a liberated communal life between men and women, all living beings and their environment, and is a fundamental goal of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement in the concept of Democratic Nation. "Hev" means "together", "jiyan" is "life" and "azad" is "free". Abdullah Öcalan began to develop this concept from experiences in his childhood, but it wasn't until 2011, when he wrote the fifth volume of his defence writings from Imrali prison, that the concept was introduced by this term. Hevjyana Azad does not only refer to relationships between men and women in terms of classic marriage, family or love relationships, but to all our relationships and how they can form real strong communities. These communities should include societal and familial bonds as well as our collective bond with nature. Hevjyana Azad, means to live in harmony with each other and nature, overcoming objectification and exploitation. It is a change of paradigm of how we understand "relationship" away from what Capitalist Modernity has taught us."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> From "Killing and transforming the dominant men" Andrea Wolf Institute of Jineoloji Academy [https://jineoloji.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Killing-and-Transforming-the-dominant-man-booklet-en-compressed\\_compressed-1.pdf](https://jineoloji.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Killing-and-Transforming-the-dominant-man-booklet-en-compressed_compressed-1.pdf)

## 5. ECONOMIC AUTONOMY

"The essence of economic autonomy predicated neither private capitalism nor state capitalism. It is predicated on ecological industry and communal economy – the form where democracy is reflected in the economy."

## 7. CULTURE

"All social groups within democratic society can coexist on the basis of differences that form around their own culture and identity without being confined to a uniform culture and citizenship."

## 9. DIPLOMACY

"Diplomacy, which once again becomes a tool for peace and solidarity as well as creative exchanges between societies, deals essentially with solutions to problems. Democratic nation diplomacy is a tool for peace and beneficial relations, not wars. It signifies a mission where wise people play a role and which has high ethical and political values."

## 6. LEGAL STRUCTURES

"The Democratic Nation is sensitive towards law, especially constitutional law. The Democratic Nation is more of a moral and political nation than a nation based on law."

## 8. SELF-DEFENCE

"Defence in humans is as much social as it is biological. Biological defence is performed by the defensive instincts of every living organism. In societal defence, however, all the individuals of the community collectively defend themselves. Moreover, the number of communities and their organisational form constantly change according to the means of defence. Defence is an essential function of society. Life cannot be sustained without it."

**"A DEMOCRATIC NATION IS ABOVE ALL ADAMANT ABOUT REMAINING A SOCIETY; IT STANDS AGAINST CAPITALIST MODERNITY WITH THE SLOGAN 'SOCIETY OR NOTHING'."**

# DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM

Democratic Confederalism finds its clearest expression, today, in the self-governance systems in North-East Syria (also known as Rojava). Here there is no nation-state, instead society is governed by its own self-governing structures and the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (DAANES). The self-governing structures practice Democratic Confederalism through the organisation of local councils. It works like a classic, horizontal, confederal, structure. Local communities organise themselves in the form of communes and local councils, they then send delegates to the town councils, which sends delegates to the district congress, and finally delegates to region-wide congresses. This method of organising does not respect state borders because there is nothing preventing regional congresses sending delegates

## NÛDEM AND AMARA

Uta Schneiderbanger, born in Mülheim an der Ruhr in 1961, called herself Nûdem in the Kurdish liberation movement.

Ekin Ceren Dođruak (Amara) was born in Ankara in 1981 to a Turkish family.

Both internationalist women were involved in the establishment of the KCK-System which is today the umbrella organisation for Democratic Confederalism in Kurdistan. They fell martyr on May 31, 2005 in a fatal car accident near the South Kurdish town of Qeladizê.

to a multi-national congress. The people make up each body and delegates are elected, one woman and one man (the so called co-chair system). While localities may have their own laws, and some things are forbidden by the administration (such as the death penalty and child marriage), there is no "national" body of law. The closest thing to a constitutional document is the Social Contract, which was first written in 2016, and renewed in 2023.

The ideals of Democratic Modernity are summed up in its three pillars, which oppose the three pillars of Capitalist Modernity. Democratic Confederalism overcomes capitalism, ecological industry overcomes industrialism, and the Democratic Nation overcomes the nation-state. The ideology binding these revolutionary principles together is Democratic Socialism.



The two internationalists were on their way back from the III. General Assembly of the People's Congress of Kurdistan (Kongra Gel) to Europe when the driver lost control of the car in the steep mountainous terrain.

“UNDER THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH WE STRUGGLE, LOVE IS HOPE, THE PRECONDITION FOR SUCCESS IN ADDRESSING OUR DUTIES. IT IS ALSO PASSION, WILL, THE POWER OF REASON, THE QUEST FOR BEAUTY, COURAGE, A WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE, AND BELIEF THAT IS NECESSARY UNTIL A DIGNIFIED END IS REACHED IN PEACE OR WAR. THE STRENGTH NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PATRIOTISM, FREEDOM, AND DIGNIFIED PEACE, WHICH IS ALSO THE STRUGGLE FOR LOVE, WILL BE FOUND IN THE REALITY OF PAJK; THE FREE MAN WILL BE CREATED FROM THE FREE WOMAN.”

**- ABDULLAH ÖCALAN**

## STRATEGY – REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE’S WAR

In 1984 the PKK declared that it would secure a Kurdish nation-state through armed struggle according to Mao’s method of protracted people’s war. Today the Kurdish freedom movement has transformed; today the aim is different, and likewise the strategy to achieve it. The Kurdish freedom movement has a clear aim: world-wide revolution for a world-wide Democratic Socialist society. A society that would be organised along the principles of Democratic Confederalism, eco-industry, and the Democratic Nation. We will build this free world with Revolutionary People’s War (in Kurdish: “Şerê Gelê Şoreşgerî”).

We have to understand that Capitalist Modernity wants to dominate every inch of this earth, and so every aspect of our lives is under constant attack: the mental, emotional, spirituality, cultural, philosophical, technological, economical and physical. Many societies, from those in Gaza, Baluchistan, and Kurdistan to Ukraine and the Amazon rainforest, are all familiar with the sound of tanks, artillery, and machine gun fire. Sanctions, infiltration, assassinations, counter-insurgency tactics, wage-slavery, drugs, hyper-sexualisation, “social” media, propaganda, surveillance, debt, the international federal reserve, and displacement through migration and gentrification all serve to destroy society. It attacks both from the outside, using physical methods, and from within by

destroying our minds and personalities, turning us into individualist, egoistic, consumer-orientated, and isolated individuals. We have to understand we are in a state of total war.

In most strategies of war, you attack your enemy with military force and destroy it. Society supports the army, and once the attacker physically retreats the war is over. But this limits the strategy of war to a time-limit, places society in a supportive role for the military, and is only relevant for societies facing occupation. Revolutionary People’s War provides a strategy for all societies to defend themselves against the total war of Capitalist Modernity. It calls on societies to build four pillars of defence. The first two are special forces of professional trained fighters, for example the HPG and YJA-Star guerilla, and civil self-defense structures, such as the YPJ/YPG people’s defense forces or the HPC (Civil Defence Forces) of Rojava. Both fight the military aspects of the war but special forces have dedicated their whole lives to the struggle, and civil defense forces have not. The third pillar is society itself. The people must build up democratic institutions to organise different parts of society and protect itself from the attacks of the enemy, for example health, culture, language, politics, economy, and diplomacy. The fourth pillar is the development of strategic alliances across societies. Based on the principle that no one is free until everyone is free, Kurdistan cannot be free until every land is free. All struggles are ultimately one, and we have to work together. This is why the Kurdish freedom movement’s struggle for Democratic Modernity requires it to be an internationalist freedom movement, a movement struggling for the liberation of all peoples of the world, for humanity itself.



## CONCLUSION

The ideology of Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK, and the Kurdish Freedom Movement asks what is a human? What is a good person? What is freedom? What is a free woman and a free man? What is truth? What is the meaning of life? And, how should I live? And by asking these questions it also offers answers to them. At its core the Kurdistan freedom movement is a revolution of mentality. It has a revolutionary aim for a world based on women's freedom, ecology, and direct democracy. A world where life is kind, generous, humble, welcoming, honest, trusting, caring, patient, joyful, respectful, forgiving, curious, and beautiful. A world that is based on love and humanity. But, if we want something we have to go get it. No one is going to do it for us. It is a huge task, it demands huge personalities, with an unbreakable will, who are deeply in love with life and the search for freedom and truth. We must build these personalities. If we want to be free, we will have to fight for it, and that starts with ourselves.



## THE 4 PILLARS OF REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLES' WAR:

1. PROFESSIONAL MILITARY FORCE (FE THE GUERRILLA)
2. CIVIL DEFENCE FORCES (YPG/YPJ, CIVIL DEFENCE FORCES)
3. ORGANIZED CIVIL SOCIETY
4. STRATEGIC ALLIANCES & RELATIONS

# INTERVIEWS

In August 2024 we interviewed international friends who are currently fighting as part of the guerrilla forces in the mountains of Kurdistan. We sent them a series of questions and asked that the friends read them, reflect, write down their thoughts and send it back to us, so that we could share them. We expected one response, instead three friends send us their responses, giving voice to some of their deep difficulties, reflections, and experiences. We are honoured to be a messenger for their struggle.

**1 In the first interview we heard from Heval Sîpan Nûjîyan, a friend from west Europe. He has been part of the PKK and their guerrilla since 2019. He told us about the current situation in the mountains and the ongoing large-scale operation launched against the Metîna mountains.**

## **Can you introduce yourself?**

My name is Sîpan Nûjîyan. My roots are in west Europe. In the year 2019 I joined the Kurdish liberation movement. Since then I have spent most of the time in the mountains of Kurdistan as a part of the peoples defence forces (HPG).

**This summer the Turkish state has deployed thousands of soldiers, armored vehicles and heavy material into Southern Kurdistan, respectively the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. How is the situation right now in Southern Kurdistan? What can you tell us about the latest developments?**

To understand the recent situation, it is at least necessary to understand the style of war that has been fought during the last nine years. Until 2015 there had been a process of negotiations between Rêber APO and the Turkish state, that gave at least a little hope for political solutions of the Kurdish question. This process was abruptly ended by the Turkish state and what followed was an attempt to wage all out war with the one goal to drown the Kurdish question in blood. This war has reached a tipping point and has become an existential matter. The Turkish state has put all they have on one card. Whatever the human, financial and political cost may be, any liberation aspirations of the Kurdish people were to be eliminated. As much as I mentioned the Turkish state, it is important to understand that the Turkish state is not an autonomous subject, as a NATO member, it is much more guided by the interests of the hegemonic forces of capitalist modernity.

Furthermore we need to understand that the situation in the region, and the developments in other places like Ukraine, Palestine and Nagorno-Karabach for example, are not at all isolated, but are all battlegrounds of the third world war. When Rêber APO defined the overall situation today as the third world war it is in no way metaphorical or exaggerative, but grounded on a deep analysis of history and geopolitics. On the frontline of this battle, Rêber APO's resistance in Imralî has brought the capitalist system to a point where its main players fear nothing more than for him to speak a single word. They seem to know that his physical liberation will be a major turning point,

and the manifestation of their ideological defeat. With this in mind we can discuss the recent situation in southern Kurdistan, in which the enemy once again tries to expand military operations supported by the KDP regime. Considering that in spite of their constant use of chemical and tactical-nuclear weapons, and enormous military spending, the enemy could not even get close to what they had originally aimed for, any further attempt makes the enemy resemble a dying beast, trying desperately to pull everything together to this one last time. If we just review the last months we witness a succession of military embarrassment on the side of the Turkish army. In the latest stage, we see the enemy defeated in his stronghold, which used to be up in the sky. For years every tactic of the enemy was based on his air-force. Drones, jets and helicopters have been the key factor in their style of war. In the end the guerrilla not only made their effect grow smaller and smaller, and finally found ways of shooting down enemy drones and helicopters over and over again. The actions, which the guerrilla is conducting with their own air-force completes the embarrassment of the enemy.

**The main target for Turkish military action right now seems to be the Metîna Region. Already since 2021 Turkish forces have been trying to get a foothold in this region. As we heard you yourself have been to Metîna recently. What can you tell us about the strategical importance of the Region. What can you tell us about the war in Metîna and the resistance of the guerrilla there?**

There are many ways to describe the importance of Metîna. Geo-strategically it is right beneath the Turkish-Iraqi state border making it an important access point between north and south Kurdistan. Demographically it is a region, where different ethnicities and beliefs have been coexisting peacefully for thousands of years, where you can find Christian churches and mosques side by side. But in this context I'd like to point out, that it needs to be realised, that the war fought in Metîna is in no way limited in the region. This war is the physical clash of two modernities, two antagonistic worldviews, a free life and self governance versus slavery in all its forms. The predetermined breaking point of 5000 years of state, power and violence has been uncovered in Kurdistan and solely in this context we can begin to understand the immense morale and energy that the guerrilla proves every day, over and over again. Realizing the historical

**NONE OF US CAN AFFORD TO UNDERESTIMATE ONES RESPONSIBILITY AND THE EFFECT OF EVERY DEED THAT IN SUM WILL DECIDE IF WE FULFILLED OUR HISTORIC ROLE OR BECOME GUILTY OF TREASON OF THE HUMAN HISTORY.**

meaningfulness of every deed and every moment is the fundament for this immense will power, that lacks any comparison. It is hard to describe the reality in a place like Metîna, especially to readers from central Europe. It is in those circumstances that one witnesses all of our values being lived and practiced in their purest essence. It is easy to talk about sharing, when the table is full of food. It is easy to talk about friendship, when existential hardships are far away, but it is exactly in those situations of the highest pressure, when diamonds are taking shape, legends are being created, history is written. Intense phases like the last years in Zap, Avaşîn and Metîna have seen endless stories of courage, selflessness and friendship, that make the wildest fiction seem pallid. Even by writing hundreds of books we cant cover even half of the realities. It is stories like the one of Şehîd Azê Erdal, who was the only one surviving a series of attacks with chemical weapons on the tunnel she fought in. On the outside the tunnel was surrounded by the enemy, inside she was surrounded by the bodies of her friends, that fell Şehîd. In this dire situation, and still able to contact the outside over radio transmitters, she showed not even the slightest sign of despair. On the contrary she motivated her friends outside, told them not to worry and kept fighting on her own and giving reports for over one month. It is stories like this making words like friendship, willpower, sacrifice and militancy winning the deepest of meanings. It is stories of friends like Şehîd Ronî, who in spite of being in other works and a two days march away from the region, he took the initiative and without further knowledge of the area he sneaked through

enemy lines and found his way to the friends at the frontline. From then on he lead months of the most intense resistance and fell Şehîd in the same heroic manner as he lived every day of his life in the revolution. It is stories like these, it is the level under which the leading revolutionary principles are put to concrete action, that form the unbreakable defence against even the most inhumane attacks. Wherever in the world we are struggling and under which ever circumstances, we have to understand the imperative of those acts and as their friends we need to try ever harder to live up to the standards, that our friends have set.

**Until now the Turkish invasion has gained little to no international attention. What do you think the solidarity movement with the revolution in Kurdistan and also progressive people in general need to do in this situation?**

Concerning solidarity movements and other progressives I believe that it is crucial to understand the gravity and historic importance of the situation and to realize that this is neither a regional, nor a national conflict, it is determining the future of life in the broadest sense imaginable. On this basis there are endless forms of action to be taken, endless ways of engaging, endless weak spots to attack. None of us can afford to underestimate one's responsibility and the effect of every deed that in sum will decide if we fulfilled our historic role or become guilty of treason of the human history. Especially I want to share how much every form of action taken in other parts of the world is a huge source of morale for our friends on the frontline. Whenever there is

a chance to follow the news the friends wonder if other parts of the world are rising up and taking action and even seeing a simple protest march has a motivating effect. But especially in the centres of capitalist modernity there are numerous targets, calling for action. Under no circumstances can we allow white torture or the use of chemical weapons become anything close to ordinary. Most of you remember the pictures of the friends falling Şehîd under the influence of chemical weapons that the friends shared to the public<sup>8</sup>. I remember that right after those shocking images a friend next to me said, that the people in Europe will not leave this drastic attempt to raise awareness without response. Unfortunately the response lacked in many ways. Only if we really become one and take our responsibility towards the friends on the front seriously, can we live a revolutionary life.

**From your experience in the mountains, which are the things (influences of the system) more difficult to overcome for internationalists? And how to do it?**

Especially for friends joining the struggle from the centres of capitalist modernity one of the major difficulties in the beginning is to realise the impact of Liberalism and especially individualism on our personalities. Many struggle the most in the beginning with accepting this, which is existential to overcome and liberate oneself. To give a few concrete examples: Most will be used to have a private sphere, that they can leave when they feel like it, and hide in whenever they feel necessary. This leads to a split personality that shows just

a few selected parts of oneself to the outside. Whenever confronted with difficulties seeking refuge in solitude or a small selected circle of other people. The life in Kurdistan and specifically in the mountains is a communal life, where we struggle together, also against our inner demons, against the parts of our personalities that in our former life we used to hide. Only by this, one can find ones authentic self, which is a huge source of strength and the basis for any further struggling and at the same time an always ongoing process. Another example is, that most of us had spent a certain time in other groups and organisational forms before getting to know the PKK. Obviously there is a huge difference between small groups of friends with high ideals and little praxis and the life of a professional revolutionary. It is one thing to mainly talk about things in theory and a whole other thing to live everything that one is talking about practically in every moment of life. So many struggle in the beginning with overcoming a certain abstract form of idealism. Another aspect of liberalism is the poor understanding of critic and self critic that takes some time for most to overcome. To accept critic and self-critic as an essential mechanism for striving in a collective form and getting rid of individualist fears and doubts, especially the fear of criticism lowering ones value is an aspect that will take some effort in the beginning. All of this together, and being well aware of the reasons and roots of ones own personality, will be the key to solve the psychological weakness of the european

<sup>8</sup> In Autumn 2022 the HPG's press centre published footage showing guerilla fighter suffering from exposure to chemical weapons. As calls for investigation of Turkey's use of chemical weapons were met with silence by the international public the footage aimed to finally bring attention and a stop to these crimes of war Source: <https://anenglishmobile.com/features/images-of-guerrillas-exposed-to-turkish-chemical-weapons-63148>

mentality. Despite what orientalist world-views try to proclaim the average European is mentally weak and quick to break in to thousands of pieces. This is easy to see in how most are unable to deal with harder situations and mental blows. Whenever one can clarify the purpose of ones being and dedicate to higher meanings than just individual goals, one can build up an enormous mental strength, giving meaning to even the hardest blows, being able to cope and grow by the most painful losses. It might seem hard to many people in Europe to cope with war reality and for example handling martyrdom of friends from up close. But instead of being unemotional or cold, on the contrary it is through deep reflection on purpose, meaning, life and death and ones role in the universe, that one gains the mental strength to pick up the weapon of a Şehîd and revenge every last one of our friends that gave their life for the survival of humanity.

**Which differences you have seen between the approach to the struggle, of internationalist friends and non-internationalists, Kurds, Arabs?**

The differences in the approach to the struggle are less defined by national or regional factors. They are more defined by the circumstances out of which one joins the struggle. Like I said before we are not a small group of friends, we are a mass organisation and obviously in the first days of joining the struggle the difference between one who has lost his whole family in actual war and joins for revenge and one that has read theory for years and went over pros and cons a long time until finally joining are a lot. Nonetheless a mutual understanding and the ability to unite is quite easily attained, because of

the circumstances of communal life, education and living together, struggling together.

**How has your personality changed since you went to the mountains?**

Obviously everyones personality goes through severe changes within the struggle and this is necessary. Rêber APO defines freedom as the ability to recreate in every moment<sup>1</sup>. So the aim is not a fixed result, rather methods to realise inner revolutions constantly. Leading us on this behalf are the values that thousands of Şehîds have created with their life and the standards that they gave us to measure ourselves. So I can not say that I have build up this and that trait or overcome this and that aspect of my personality, much more I can say that by every step we make forward one sees that there is even more to accomplish, even more deeper levels to understand and also by every action and with every peace of experience we gain more efficient tools.

**How do you think we can live Hevjijana Azad outside/away from the free mountains?**

As much as the mountains are the heart of the revolution and a place that I wish for everyone to get a taste of and where the circumstances to free one's self are the most advantageous, it is not about the place where we are. The important thing is how much we are connected to the unity of the struggle, what we have in our hearts and minds. So by being Heval with Rêber APO and the Şehîds we can live Hevjijana Azad even in the most distant places.



**What would you like your friends and comrades in Europe to be thinking about and doing right now?**

The phase that we are living through as humanity right now is more than extraordinary and the necessity to fight is according to that. This means, that we are not at a stage in history where we can be a bit of this and a bit of that. The historical situation forces a clear decision on us. It is either Capitalist Modernity or Democratic Modernity. It is either exploitation and genocide or liberation whatever the cost. It is either a few at the cost of the many, or all for each other in unity. It is humanity becoming a cancerous disease in the whole organism of the universe or a symbiotic part of the whole. There is no half way and no in between any more and we can be either friends struggling towards light or commit treason towards the history of humanity. The stage that we are in needs clear approaches to answer the fundamental question of how to live. Any further thinking without being clear on those points is lacking any meaning.

**WHENEVER ONE CAN CLARIFY THE PURPOSE OF ONES BEING AND DEDICATE TO HIGHER MEANINGS THAN JUST INDIVIDUAL GOALS, ONE CAN BUILD UP AN ENORMOUS MENTAL STRENGTH**





**2** In the second interview Heval Lêgerîn Partîzan, from south Europe, spoke about the life in the mountains, the role of internationalists in the guerrilla and how the revolution starts with ourselves.

**From your experience in the mountains, which are the things (from the influence of the system) more difficult to overcome for internationalists?**

**And how to do it?**

First of all, thank to the comrades that are dedicating time and efforts to make our international struggle bigger with their ideas and proposals. It is a really important task for all militants to have discussions about these topics and to improve our tactics and strategies of organization. It's difficult to put all of our thoughts and experiences into words, because we often have the feeling that words can not describe the intensity of the struggle, the difficulties and the beauty. But it is a needed task and a vital role to try to share our experiences in the most open way, with the aim to give our humble contribution to the bigger struggle that is in front of us. And with this spirit, we commemorate our martyrs. Today is 15th August, so we hope we can also write some words in order to make a tribute to Heval Agit, who, with his perspective and determination, created the possibility for many Kurdish fighters to make their dreams a reality, in the beginning of the creation of the guerilla. With his action, he also gave us international fighters, and especially us women fighters, the chance to see ourselves in the ranks of the guerilla and to take a role in the armed struggle.

**THE IMPORTANT THING IS HOW MUCH WE ARE CONNECTED TO THE UNITY OF THE STRUGGLE, WHAT WE HAVE IN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS. SO BY BEING HEVAL WITH RÊBER APO AND THE ŞEHÎDS WE CAN LIVE HEVJIYANA AZAD EVEN IN THE MOST DISTANT PLACES.**

**From your experience in the mountains, which are the things (from the influence of the system) more difficult to overcome for internationalists?**

**And how to do it?**

The life in the mountains for every militant means a deep process of building ourselves up both in a personal and collective frame. To build means for us, to learn, to know, to analyse, to share, to discuss and to take one of the biggest decisions of your life: to fight against the influences that capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism has build inside ourselves. That means, that the way you look at and feel the world, your personality, your way of loving and struggling, comradeship, your habits and even the knowledge you have, will experience a process of transformation. Life and struggle in the mountains do not have different souls, on our path the life and the struggle become one. That means for us, that we can not separate what it is happening around us from the deep internal struggle for changing and building ourselves. The first time I arrived in the free mountains of Kurdistan I felt that even me (who is not a Kurdish fighter; who came from the south of Europe) could

feel that the life and the will that the soul of the PKK creates builds a deep meaning of life, through struggle, for everyone that decides to fight and to learn while constructing and defending a new path, far away from states and their mentality.

That's why since the beginning of the history of the PKK, internationalist fighters have joined the ranks of the guerilla. Rêber Apo created the seed for liberation for all of humanity, and with this the answer against domination. For us this made the possibility to struggle, real. That's why internationalist fighters with the legacy of all struggles for liberation of the past, the inspiration of Rêber APO, and the example of thousands of martyrs, are coming to the mountains. Because we know, that our life needs to be the continuation of this historical struggle for liberation, and we want to take part. We want to contribute and learn, to fight for life. The mountains are the seed for the creation of free communal life, which is the heart of the revolution. The nature, the comrades, the needs that the struggle creates, the attacks of the enemy, the courage and victories of the comrades, the process of education, the security, and the way to organize life, all become one united soul. Every comrade, every tree, every stone, every day of rain, every moment of difficulties, every detail, have a deep meaning for how we live and how we defend ourselves. Every day I saw the power of comradeship in the struggle between each other, a struggle where criticism and self-criticism needs to be the base for developing our love and be understood as a tool to overcome difficulties and to find the solutions in the process of transformation. Even when we

know that we can't always understand criticisms fast, or even accept them. For me, this was a hard process. Because every critic contains the reality of your personality, and in this process you get ready for seeing yourself from another perspective, that's not just your own opinion. Also you need to show the same respect and love for your other comrades, struggling to also give critics that can improve their personalities, the works and communal life. In this frame, internationalist comrades have a lot to go through. The adaptation in the guerilla has a lot to do with yourself but also with the comrades you have around you. I did not experience big difficulties in physical terms. Everybody needs some time to go through the process of adaptation. The process of learning "gerilatî"<sup>10</sup> has no end, that is why, to overcome the difficulties that show up in daily life it is important to learn how the movement in the mountains was built up and see the ideology in a wide frame. It has been difficult to build a new soul according to Rêber Apo's ideology. I had a lot questions about myself: How can we really understand the ideology? Can we free our minds, our behaviour? How can we build free and revolutionary personalities? Can we even make deep and correct analyses of our own oppression? Is our understanding of collectivity really in service of real comradeship? How can we reach the level of developing a personality that becomes a "fedayê jîyanê"<sup>11</sup>? For us, the history and the experiences of the guerilla, from the first years until today, holds the answer to these difficulties. Specially, the role of the women comrades has had a lot to do with developing the revolutionary mindset and strength that today fights against the occupation of the

fascist Turkish state. When internationalist fighters join the guerilla, it's a process of rebirth. Every woman that joins the struggle (does not matter where you have grown up) has decided to cut the chains of patriarchy, which means to intensify the internal struggle with oneself. It means that we want the women's liberation ideology to become our blood and to build our cells. The will of building one united soul means that for, us as women, our liberation grows and grows, until the point that you can feel the joy and the pain of every woman. But many times, for the fact of being an internationalist fighter, I saw myself overprotected. The overprotection sometimes has an explanation, but many times it cuts short the possibility to build this united soul that we want to reach. We do not want to be different than any other militant. We want to be the same energy. The identity of the PKK has broken the borders that nation-states have created; a new identity has been born in the frame of a revolutionary struggle. This is also our identity now. The PKK identity unites all of its fighters with communality and equality, it unites all the hearts that fight and feel with the same heartbeat. We know

**WE WANT THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION IDEOLOGY TO BECOME OUR BLOOD AND TO BUILD OUR CELLS. THE WILL OF BUILDING ONE UNITED SOUL MEANS THAT FOR, US AS WOMEN, OUR LIBERATION GROWS AND GROWS, UNTIL THE POINT THAT YOU CAN FEEL THE JOY AND THE PAIN OF EVERY WOMEN.**

that we grew up in the middle of the barbarism of capitalism, that is why I really believe, on the one hand, that internationalist comrades must learn more deeply about the sociology, history, religion and culture of the Middle East in general to better understand Rêber Apo and the PKK. On the other hand, we need to break the fear of differences and take advantage of the diversity of our potentiality, together. This will bring big possibilities for a revolutionary internationalist struggle. We do not want to be different. We want to live, until the end, in accordance with the struggle. We want to exist in the soul of PKK. Rêber APO said that "every person is in itself a universe", that means for us that every militant keeps their own essence, and gives it to the soul of the movement. Our communal frame of responsibility does not understand borders, our colourful roots are our diversity, our diversity strengthens the fight against oppression. To give meaning means to deepen the struggle for liberation. For this reason, with the past and the present of our own people's heritage we found in the PKK the force that can bring all of us together. In this sense we need to struggle even stronger to be one soul, to take advantage of our diversities, to be open to learning from every comrade and, with criticism and self-criticism, improving the path for every militant.

<sup>10</sup> The practice and life of the guerilla

<sup>11</sup> Fedayê Jîyanê (eng. fedayî = self-sacrifice, jîyan = life): describes the lifestyle of the guerilla who live a life of dedication, commitment, altruism and selflessness for all peoples.

## **Which differences you have seen between the approach to the struggle, of internationalist friends and non-internationalists, kurds, arabs?**

To the question of different ways of struggling, I think that it is more needed for us internationalists to ask ourselves, what can we learn and achieve when our struggle really represents a front line of diversity in the fight for freedom? Kurds, Arabs, and other peoples from the Middle East have different stories, sociologies and traditions. The peoples from Europe, Latin America, Africa, also have different sociologies, histories and life conditions. That is why our analyses need to go deeper in understanding the reality of different the territories so we can better understand the reality of people and the ways of struggle. The story of oppressed peoples has not been determined by a piece of land. This story has been experienced in every corner of this world. Maybe in different times, maybe with different approaches, maybe even the pain and fear has a different colour, but the suffering and the efforts have the same characteristics everywhere. That's why we feel that the victories for freedom around the world are the victories for all of humanity in the search for freedom. But there is not a safe and free land anywhere in the world that can say a process of freedom and peace has been fully implemented. Because in the lands where a free and democratic peoples system of life has been developed (for example in Rojava or in the Zapatista communities) the hegemonic forces conduct attacks, with bullets, mercenaries, artillery, tanks, and drones or war planes. The attacks of our enemy are also clear ideological statement for the

state and their army. That's why our stance in this context needs to be even more clear. The beauty of the struggle sometimes shows up in the most difficult moments, when our comradeship and love are the example for overcoming national borders. For us this means, to insist in every comrade, to insist in every peoples.

## **How do you think we can live Hevjyana Azad outside/away from the free mountains ?**

The biggest fight for liberation starts within ourselves. That's why it is quite difficult to make good and deep analyses of ourselves on our own, you need the perspective and the criticisms of the comrades around you. We are not used to analysing, discussing, or, more than anything else, to really open ourself up in front of our comrades in order to really share who we are, how we grew up and the influences of the system on us. It is the never ending struggle, which opens a horizon in front of ourselves. "Hevjyana azad" I believe can be built, in whatever place of the world, when the people are determined to go through the joy and the pain of this process. It's up to to the will and determination of the people. It is the direct confrontation with individualism and capitalism. In this way in the mountains, we build a way of life that is connected with the ideology, the values of the Movement, and the example and inspiration of Rêber APO and our martyrs. We fight to change our mistakes and deficiencies so that the good and the bad of our personalities goes out of us, to be confronted by the whole community. You can not hide, this

possibility does not exist. For me it has been a process especially about understanding internal patriarchal behaviours and the confrontation with the “ideal” women that capitalism creates. I got involved in political activity when I was quite young, I learned from the revolutionaries of my land and the dirty politics of the state against women organizations, but in the mountains I could also see my own role in all these years of struggle better. To build a free revolutionary personality and a true love for life in the midst of capitalism is a very hard and difficult path, because life around you is created to accelerate egoism, social hierarchy and individualism to organize the mindset of society. So in this way we are manipulated.

The revolutionary movements in Europe created a path for us, the younger generations, so we could also feel the responsibility we have and take the step to join the struggle. But there has been weak analysis on the personalities and how to develop ourselves in order to confront liberalism, patriarchy and oppression. I saw how inside the radical left movement hierarchies were not confronted, and I realized my own role in this. I learnt another way of developing comradeship, in the sense of giving effort to really understand the stories of every one and not just the stories of a few. I learnt how to think in a bigger frame, for the developments of the shared goals and not for the developments of just a part of society. To acknowledge the need of the community brings big possibilities for seeing the needs of society in general. I had to look back at how we create our comradeship, and also confront the relations towards family members to better

understand my own behaviour. My role inside my family was not different than my role inside the struggle. I had to understand why being the big sister of a working class family impacted how I build my personality as a woman. We can not say we reach an understanding for all the limitations in our personality, but I better understood the roots of the borders that capitalism creates in ourselves, so I could start the struggle to overcome classical and liberal approaches.

Building Hevjyana Azad can start in every corner of the world, anywhere where the ones that are determined are not scared to confront their own selves. When a people know and love their own history and culture they are more prepared to build a free communal life and be ready to defend this life against the enemies of freedom.

**EVERY COMRADE, EVERY TREE,  
EVERY STONE, EVERY DAY OF RAIN,  
EVERY MOMENT OF DIFFICULTIES,  
EVERY DETAIL, HAVE A DEEP  
MEANING FOR HOW WE LIVE AND  
HOW WE DEFEND OURSELVES.**

**What would you like your friends and comrades back home to be thinking about and doing right now?**

For the comrades in other places in the world, that really are believing in a broad frame of internationalist struggle, it is important to understand that our task it is not just solidarity works. Our task is to improve the struggle in all senses with all the tools we have at our hands. For this, it is very important to know the history of our lands. We need even deeper researches and analyses. It is necessary to get out of this defensive mindset and build an offensive approach.

Of course defence is always needed but, in the historical moment that we are living in now, it is more necessary than ever that we unite our forces to create a strong front line against the new fascism that, everywhere, is growing and getting organised. We need to be able to create ourselves at the same time as we destroy the the liberal mindset. The possibilities of all places in the world are different. That means every territory needs to take responsibility according to their people's reality and to build opportunities. To develop a deep struggle against domination we need a clear sense of duty and commitment that brings our way of thinking closer to the roots of the communality. We need to build a more radical line of breaking with Capitalist Modernity and put our lives themselves in the centre of the struggle, and connect it to the heritage of the thousands of martyrs for freedom. The weight of the path of history is nothing less than the answer for confronting the oppression of nation states. The

ones that feel passion can bring even more people to feel this love for life and to overcome individual approaches. The task of the comrades in Europe is this: to be more creative in the actions to really struggle harder to spread the ideology that Rêber APO developed for the liberation of the earth. To overcome the passive role; to stop complaining and create networks with each other. These networks need to overcome geographical distance and open a front line against capitalism, fascism and patriarchy, in every place in the world. We need to create a life that can take revenge for the centuries of domination, annihilation and colonization. We need to set ourselves on fire to burn all traces of the influences of the system in order the to destroy the roots of darkness of the hegemonic power. The most powerful tool of struggle is the human being itself. It is now the time to take big decisions. Building up also means long term thinking, so we need a long term perspective for every step we do. We are used to living in the present moment, but we need to develop a better understanding of struggle. In every moment of darkness, there is light. So we want to create a light that gives oppressed people the tools for their own liberation. That's why every territory and peoples needs to see their responsibility for organizing themselves and to share their knowledge with everyone else who has decided to struggle, until the light burns the darkness on our path. We hope that our analyses, experiences, and also our mistakes can contribute to the rising up and the learnings of the peoples world wide. We know that we have a lot to learn and a lot to overcome, but our aims and thoughts are clear on the shared path for a revolutionary

struggle. The biggest, most beautiful part of the struggle is to feel yourself as a part of the soul that, without time to rest, walks towards the building up of a new life. Examples of which we find when we think about Şehîd Zîlan and Şehîd Berîtan, or Commandante Ramona from the EZLN, or the brigades of women fighters that fought against fascist armies in the south of Europe, specially on the Iberic Peninsula (Spain) and in Italy. With our march we hope we can gather even more people who fight for the liberation of Rêber APO. Rêber APO says "there are no revolutionaries without dreams", so we dream to make our march bigger so we can be a force of more and more people building a new universe for liberation. And with that a dream, from the mountains, to the villages, to the cities in every corner of the world.

**THE SECRET OF THE MOUNTAINS IS COMBINING THE PROCESS OF BUILDING UP FREE LIVE, REAL FRIENDSHIPS AND IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION WITH THE REALITY OF WAR. THE BASIS OF THE GUERRILLA RESISTANCE IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THE INNER FIGHT AGAINST THE INFLUENCES OF THE SYSTEM.**

**3 In the third interview Heval Mizgîn Xweza talks about the internationalist nature of the Kurdish freedom movement and the need to reconnect with our cultures and histories. She also shares some insights in how we can overcome the mentality of capitalism, liberalism in our own personalities.**

**From your experience in the mountains, which influences of the system are more difficult to overcome for internationalists? And how to do it?**

In the mountains of Kurdistan there is a military war happening between the Kurdish freedom guerrilla and the Turkish fascist army. It is well known that the fascist attacks of the Turkish state are actively supported by NATO and other global forces as well. For the guerrilla forces of the Kurdish liberation movement that means to resist against the most modern war technology. To be confronted with airstrikes, chemical weapons and a deep psychological warfare on a daily basis is not a normal situation for anybody. Rêber APO says 'The best technology is the human itself'. Weapons made by humans can be countered by the creativity of the human mind. Therefore the most important thing to do in the mountains is building up a strong and free personality that is able to resist in the hard circumstances of war. The secret of the mountains is combining the process of building up free live, real friendships and ideological education with the reality of war. The basis of the guerrilla resistance is without a doubt the inner fight against the influences of the system. In different ways every human has been influenced by it.

But of course there are differences, attached to different socialization and backgrounds. From the beginning on, the Kurdish liberation movement had internationalist approaches and combined inspirations from other liberation struggles -- Vietnam, Cuba and Angola -- with the reality of the local circumstances of Kurdistan. In the group that founded the liberation struggle there were even Turkish and Laz friends. For internationalists it is really important to understand this reality of the movement -- if you are not Kurd, it does not mean that you are a stranger, if you share the Apoist ideology you are naturally a part of it.

To build up a free personality, first it is important to know your own history and culture. It is not right to try to leave your past and your national characteristics behind and to try to be Kurdish. But on the other hand you cannot refuse to understand that the Kurdish culture has had a big impact on the guerrilla culture on the mountains. Without imitating the Kurdish culture, adapting the spirit of PKK is a struggle that can be handled by overcoming straight black and white thinking patterns. Connected to this understanding, respecting and loving the mountains as Kurdish land and seeing the bigger importance of freeing the mountains for the whole of humanity is important. The system is still presenting the PKK as a nationalist terrorist group that is using foreign fighters for its own interests. But the reality is the opposite. A lot of internationalists got to know themselves on the mountains and deepened the connection with their own land as well. But still these prejudices have an influence on their own personality. Seeing yourself as a helper, not taking the full responsibility for

the struggle are some burdens that have to be overcome. The secret of deeply becoming one soul with the mountains is building up the identity of the PKK in yourself. Rêber Apo defined Heval Haki Karer, a Turkish friend and the first Şehîd of the liberation movement as his hidden soul. He did not see himself as a stranger or a helper, he was ready to take big responsibilities in the movement. But on the other hand he respected the Kurdish friends, especially Rêber APO in the deepest way and never saw himself above the Kurdish friends. Understanding this, helps to overcome the difficulties of learning the communal life on the mountains and to fight with all your power for the free live in Kurdistan and everywhere.

**Which differences you have seen between the approach to the struggle, of internationalist friends and non-internationalists, Kurds, Arabs?**

Of course it is difficult to separate between internationalist and non-internationalist friends. Internationalism is a part of the Apoist ideology. Without being an internationalist it is not possible to be part of the liberation movement. But still there are different approaches of friends with regards to their cultural background. Some people might say that Kurds are approaching the struggle more emotionally, seeing their homeland in a war situation and wanting to fight for their freedom. On the other hand internationalist friends are joining with an ideological approach, on being influenced by the philosophy of Rêber APO. But I think that



actually every revolutionary finds his or her way with their emotional intelligence. Rêber APO says that every revolution starts with an emotion. This is the same for internationalists as well. Of course a lot of internationalists are getting to know the struggle through reading and ideological research. But to come to the mountains and fight for a free live with everything you have, needs more than just reading and talking. Most important is to feel the spirit of revolution. Without these emotions of rage, without a connection to the şehîds and without a big search for living a meaningful life it is not possible to be a guerrilla.

Another point is the internationalist friends who approach really idealistically in the beginning. Seeing difficulties and maybe mistakes in the revolutionary practice in Kurdistan is sometimes like a shock. To understand the reality of war and the wideness of revolutionary processes, is hard to understand in the beginning. The mentality of thinking you know better, always wanting to do everything different, always proposing, can be a burden in understanding the revolution. Initiative is an important revolutionary characteristic but in a war situation it is not possible to discuss everything all the time. There is knowledge from experience that has to be protected as well. So its really important to listen, to give meaning to the existing culture of living and fighting. It is important to understand the Kurdish culture as the mother of human culture, as Mesopotamia is the cradle of the humanity.

## **How has your personality changed since you went to the mountains?**

Coming to the mountains of Kurdistan is like coming home in a really intensive way of understanding. Feeling a deep historical connection to the earth that you feel under your feet especially for me as a women was a deep experience. Being in the area in that human became human made me feel myself as a human being in a new way. In this way my feelings were getting stronger in every way.

In the ideological education in the first time in my live I could give meaning to the saying 'I know that I don't know anything'. Of course I'm not denying my knowledge from before but I understood how extremely narrow my horizon was before. Getting to know so many friends that have not seen any city for years but know the history of European civilization a thousand times better than me of course let me understand the boundaries that had build up in my mind. Seeing things from different perspectives brought me closer to the truth, and feeling this creates a really a big excitement. The most important thing for me was being able to live such a high level of friendship. This made a big impact on me. The basis of the friendship connections in the mountains is the heritage of thousand of şehîds that gave their lives. Being close to the war makes you feel the beauty of being alive and being together as friends even more. The deepness, the culture of being there for each other and without any second thoughts fighting to free each other makes you feel every feeling like happiness, responsibility, overcoming difficulty in a new way.

**How do you think we can live Hevjyana Azad outside/away from the Free Mountains?**

The basis of living Hevjyana Azad away from the mountains is understanding the truth of Rêber Apo. He is the best example of a personality that has overcome the boundaries of time and place. With the right way of giving meaning it is possible to no longer search freedom in a special time or place, but to be a source of freedom by yourself. With this approach it is possible to spread the spirit of the free mountains everywhere and limit the influence of the system on friendship connections. This is why we see it as really important to create our connection with Rêber Apo as a friendship as well, even if we don't know him in person.

**What would you like your friends and comrades in Germany to be thinking about and doing right now?**

I trust in my comrades and all the people (not just in Germany) that are sympathizing with the Kurdish freedom movement to think about the right things. But it's really important how we think, how we approach the things that we are thinking about every day, to give the right meaning. Okay we understood there is a war going on and we want to do something against it. But how much are we fighting to realize the revolutionary dreams that we have? We are reading and discussing about the ongoing third world war. But are we feeling the pain, the anger and the hope of all the resisting forces in the right way? If we talk about

**WE ARE READING AND DISCUSSING ABOUT THE ONGOING THIRD WORLD WAR. BUT ARE WE FEELING THE PAIN, THE ANGER AND THE HOPE OF ALL THE RESISTING FORCES IN THE RIGHT WAY?**

responsibility, are we really playing our role in this war? The mountains of Kurdistan are closer connected to us than we think. And to overcome our own personal doubts is more necessary than ever. I remember before I joined the guerrilla I felt the fear of dying in myself. I thought if I will go to Kurdistan there will be the possibility to die. But then I realized that there are big revolutionaries, women, men and children every day giving their lives for the cause of freedom. How can I think that my soul is more meaningful than these souls? I was getting really angry in understanding how this system influenced my mentality in a dirty way. And I got encouraged to fight against this deep individualism and convincing myself in fighting to be a fedayî revolutionary by myself.

**IF WE TALK ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY, ARE WE REALLY PLAYING OUR ROLE IN THIS WAR? THE MOUNTAINS OF KURDISTAN ARE CLOSER CONNECTED TO US THAN WE THINK.**



**“HOW MUCH ARE WE FIGHTING  
TO REALIZE THE REVOLUTIONARY  
DREAMS THAT WE HAVE?”**

