

TURKEY, THE KURDS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY, 29.3.17



RIC-Edinburgh banner at the 10.11.16 Protest against the jailing of the Parliamentary Opposition in Turkey

This was organised following of RIC-Edinburgh's participation on the November 10th, 2016 Protest outside the Scottish Parliament against the jailing of the Parliamentary opposition in Turkey and the suppression of the Kurds

A Kurdish speaker (name withheld for security reasons) gave the following introduction:-

Overview of the current situation in Turkey and Kurdistan

Turkey's war on Kurds.

End of democracy and human rights.

Rise of fascism and racism.

Erdogan's Presidential referendum and steps towards one-man rule

General elections June 2015

HDP Peoples Democratic Party (HDP) gained 80 seats.

see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peoples%27_Democratic_Party_\(Turkey\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peoples%27_Democratic_Party_(Turkey))

July 2015 Ankara and Suruc massacre Large scale oppression and human rights violations

November elections 2015

PDP gains 59 seats

Still 3rd largest party

Early 2016 - Turkish State's war on the Kurdish population begins

Examples of state killing:-

Taybet - Mother

Haci Lokman Birlik - filmmaker activist

Cemile - 11 year old girl

Mother cries wanting to go to her son, burning alive in a basement floor.

Cizre 08.02.2016

Examples of state destruction of towns

Lice, Cizre, Nusaybabin, Qandil, Sheik Mqsood, Gever

Action of Turkish fascists at HDP offices

Turkish state indoctrination of children

Search of Kurdish girl at gunpoint

BBC reported UN's findings on human rights violations in curfew hit areas of south-east turkey (north Kurdistan Up to 500,000 people, mostly Kurds, were displaced between July 2015 and December 2016, a UN report said.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-39228548?SThisFB>

In the period that followed, **UN investigators documented** thousands of killings, disappearances and cases of torture during government operations that affected more than 30 towns and neighbourhoods.

Turkey to be added to European list of undemocratic countries.

In a further blow to Turkey's spotty global image, the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) called March 8 for Turkey to **come under its formal scrutiny**, a status reserved for members that are deemed to be backsliding on democracy. Nine countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Russia are currently on that hook.

Examples of resistance

Statement from Asli Erdogan -Turkish author and activist

Felenknas Uca MP - protecting an activist

15th July 2016 - So called "Coup" attempt fails. State of emergency established.

July, 2016 - Erdogan introduces purge.

Education - 42,799
Police - 9298
Armed Forces - 6361
Justice - 3000
Sports - 2345
Banking & Finance - 1637
Others ministries - 1442
Media 377
PM office - 257
Governors - 246
Intelligence - 100
Others - 308

Jan. 2017 - Erdogan attempts to suppress elements of remaining parliamentary democracy and introduce a Presidential system and end independent judiciary

April, 2017 - Referendum to be held

The NO Campaign is making the following points:-

a The office of the prime minister disappears, making way for a strong, executive president supported by vice-presidents.

The president would have the power to appoint cabinet ministers without requiring a confidence vote from parliament, propose budgets and appoint more than half the members of the nation's highest judicial body.

The president would also have the power to dissolve the national assembly and impose states of emergency.

Parliament would be elected every five years, instead of every four.

It also introduces technical requirements that would make it harder for the assembly to remove the president from office or bring down his government.

Activities of solidarity campaigners

Discussion

In the following discussion, the following questions were asked:-

1. Will there be a NO vote?

There is probably a No majority, but the Turkish government is doing everything possible to prevent this occurring.

2. Who is Erdogan's base

Erdogan was originally able to appeal on both the basis of Turkish nationalism and Islam and the earlier success of his economic reforms. However, his increasingly authoritarianism, and the worsening economic situation has led to a shrinkage in his base of support.

3. Is the HDP a party for Kurdish independence?

The HDP includes people who support Kurdish independence, but following Abdullah Ocalan's (leader of the Kurdish Workers Party), now jailed since 1999) strategy, the party is now for building grassroots democracy, not the exiting state, and has support from a much wider spread of people - including socialists, feminists and minorities.

4. What is the situation in Syria and Iraq,

The YPG 's (Peoples Protection Units) are similar to the PKK, whilst the Democratic Union Party has similar politics to the HDP.

However, Barzani's KDP government in northern Iraq is allied with Erdogan.

5. What sort of help can RIC provide?

Joining the protests against Erdogan and attending solidarity meetings. There is also an attempt being made to resuscitate the cross-party group in Holyrood.

6. Will Trump make things worse?

Very likely. There has been some cooperation between the US and YPG in the defence of Rojava when under attack by ISIL. However, Kurds always knew that this was likely to be short lived, and that after ISIL has been defeated, the US will abandon the YPG. There is a Kurdish saying - "We have no friends but the mountains."