



International Initiative

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„Freedom for Abdullah Ocalan – Peace in Kurdistan“

Press release

Ocalan tortured in prison and threatened with death International Initiative warns against escalation

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For the first time since his abduction to Turkey in 1999 Abdullah Ocalan, founder of PKK held in strict solitary confinement, has been physically tortured and openly threatened with death.

As his lawyers told the press yesterday in Istanbul, Ocalan has been dragged by prison personnel to an adjoining room, forced to the ground by three persons while his cell was ravaged. When he protested against these brutal measures, he was explicitly threatened with death.

Ocalan has been held under isolation conditions that is defined as torture. He is the only prisoner on Imrali Island, guarded by 1000 soldiers. Council of Europe's Anti-torture committee (CPT) has denounced his imprisonment conditions harshly in its four previous reports and up to the present day.

Since 2005 the juridical, psychological and now also physical assaults have continuously been aggravated. Last year highly elevated levels of heavy metals had been detected in Ocalan's hair and body, the source of which could not be determined. Subsequently CPT underlined the devastating consequences of the solitary confinement for his health.

Since Ilker Basbug became chief of the Turkish general staff, for the first time physical assaults against Abdullah Ocalan have occurred. In late June 2008 his head has been completely shaven against his will. The new assaults however are unprecedented and related to the latest operations of annihilation of the Turkish army and the threats that chief of staff Ilker Basbug has been making via the press for weeks. Furthermore the emergence of a lynching atmosphere against the Kurds in Turkey gives reason for concern and alarm.

The International Initiative is highly concerned about the new practice of physical torture. Its spokesperson John Tobisch-Haupt stated on Thursday:

“The detention conditions at Imrali have been unacceptable for a long time. Such assaults constitute another violation of the European Human Rights Convention. Coupled with the military operations they are suited to further heat up the political tensions. We even fear that there might be the threat of a civil war.”

First Signatories

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

The International Initiative calls on the European Governments, the EU, the Council of Europe and the Anti-torture-committee (CPT) to assume responsibility and put a hold to the inhumane imprisonment conditions at the “Turkish Guantánamo”. Europe must finally make human rights and the solution of the Kurdish question the central criterion in its relations with Turkey. Silence, in the face of the current escalation, means consent.

The International Initiative calls on the Turkish government to distance itself from its policy of escalation and resort to dialogue instead of inciting more bloodshed.

The International Initiative calls on all circles in the society of Turkey to oppose the politics of their state leadership and make use of all possibilities to lower the tensions and resolve the conflict.

Note:

Since 15 October 2008 a vigil is being held at Neumarkt in Cologne. Until 8 November Kurds will demonstrate day and night against the detention conditions at Imrali and for a peaceful solution of the Kurdish question. At **1 p.m. on Saturday, 18 October 2008**, a demonstration is scheduled. The International Initiative supports the vigil and the demonstration and calls for solidarity with the demonstrators.