

PKK and the German Hostages

News from the KNC Public Relations Committee Kurdish National Congress of North America

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California-USA (July 17, 2008) On July 9, 2008 Lars Holger Renne, Martin Georg and Helmut Johann were kidnapped by the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) guerillas in the Mount Ararat region. PKK authorities stated that the kidnapping of these German citizens was in response to the anti-democratic pressures of the German government against Kurdish institutions and refugees that have dramatically increased recently. The PKK also stated that they would release the hostages if/when the German government stops its aggressive policies.

First, the KNC wishes the families of the kidnapped patience and fortitude. We believe that the hostages should and will be released and will join their families soon, as was the case in previous incidents including the November 2007 release by the PKK of eight Turkish soldiers captured after an armed conflict at the border of Turkey and Iraq. The Democratic Society Party (DTP) and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) played a crucial role in the release of Turkish soldiers. The DTP has also expressed its willingness to play a role in the release of the hostages if contacted by the German authorities, who so far have preferred to contact the Turkish police and military for the case.

We call on the PKK to release the hostages immediately and with respect and dignity. Notwithstanding the German government's anti-democratic attitude towards Kurdish people and their rights, we would emphasize that this does not justify the kidnapping of civilian tourists. We express our deep concerns about possible repercussions this action may have in terms of increasing the oppression of Kurdish people and harming their rightful cause for justice and freedom; lest the Turkish and German governments use this as an excuse to terrorize the Kurd's rightful grievances for which the PKK itself has been fighting.

We would also like to call on the German government to stop its support for the Turkish government in repressing Kurdish rights and freedoms. Unfortunately, the German government has been supporting the Turkish state's antidemocratic policies for the sake of its economic interests. The German Minister of Interior recently banned the activities of the Roj TV, a satellite Kurdish TV channel airing its broadcasts from Denmark because Kurdish TV broadcasting has been strictly banned in Turkey until very recently. It should also be noted that 56 Kurdish mayors have supported Roj TV with a joint letter addressed to the Prime Minister of Denmark not to ban the channel under pressure from Turkey. Unlike Germany, Denmark did not choose the anti-democratic option and instead recognizes Roj TV as an important venue and vehicle for Kurds to express themselves freely.

The German government should also put an immediate end to its repressive policies towards Kurdish institutions and refugees based in Germany. The German police have been raiding the offices of Kurdish associations and organizations created by refugees

and asylum-seekers " those already struggling with life in exile. Also, the German government has extradited several Kurds to Turkey based on alleged links with the PKK. Unfortunately, the German government's policies towards the Kurds in general and the PKK in particular have not been constructive in finding a peaceful solution for the Kurdish issue. On the contrary, this support has encouraged Turkey to implement increasingly aggressive policies towards the Kurds, which is well documented in the records of the European Court of Human Rights, which regularly convicts Turkey for violating the rights of Kurds, primarily their right to life. As KNC, we call on Germany and other Western democratic countries to promote democracy in deeds and not in words for a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue.

Finally, the KNC urges the Turkish state to stop its military operations. Not only because that they would put the lives of the three German citizens in danger, but also because military operations do not contribute in any sense to a sustainable solution to the issue. We believe that serious and effective democratic openings for the improvement of Kurdish rights and freedoms would help to initiate the disarmament of the PKK who so far have declared five unilateral cease-fires which fell on the deaf ears of the Turkish state and governments.

We reiterate our deepest empathies with the hostages and their families and urge all parties to take immediate responsibility and action for the release of the hostages, so as to bring to conclusion this unfortunate event in a manner preserving human life, peace and dignity.

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