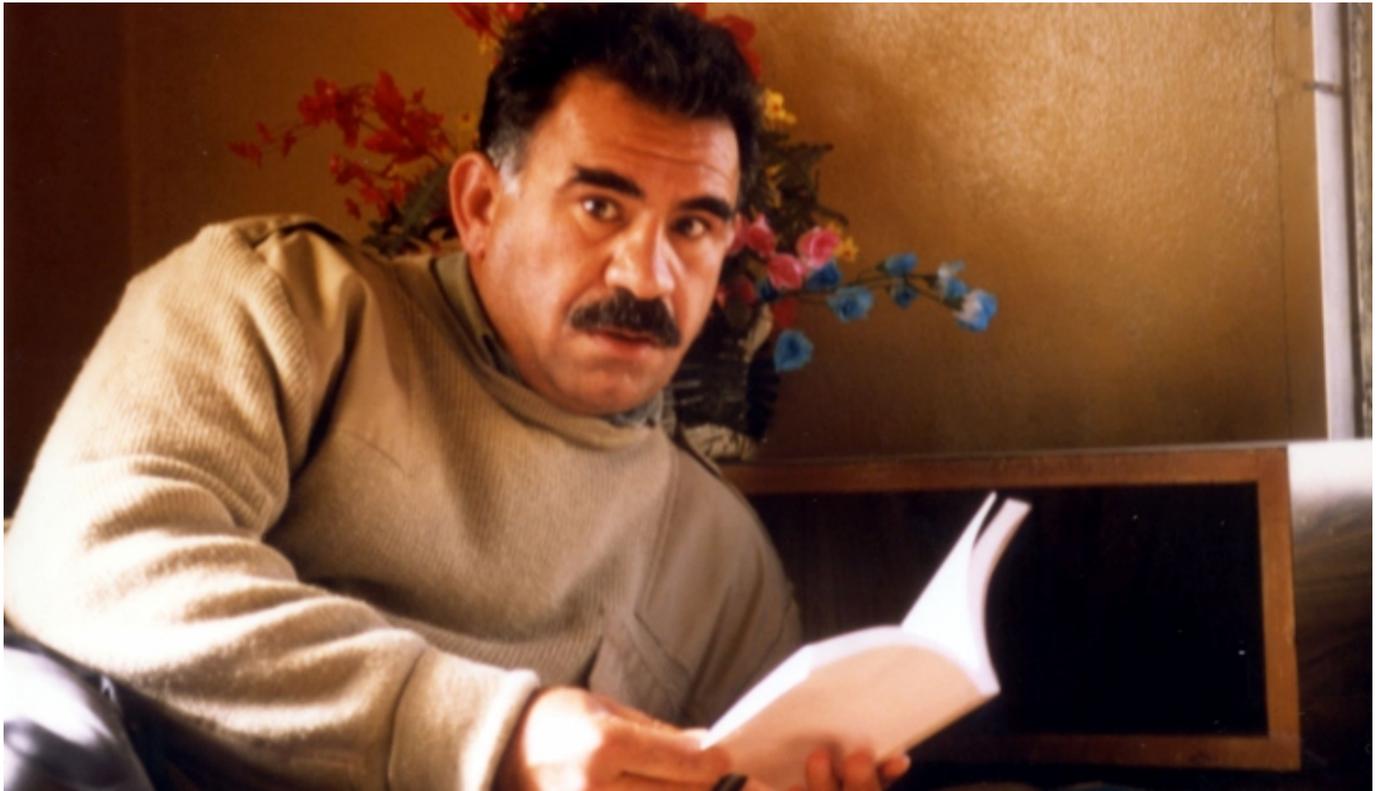


PKK leader Ocalan permitted first meeting since 2016

by Meghan Bodette - 12/01/2019 19:27



Imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan has met with his brother, Mehmet Ocalan, in his first meeting since 2016.

A statement issued by HDP co-chair Pervin Buldan [claimed](#) that Ocalan was in good health, and that further information on the meeting would be released in a few days.

Ocalan has been held in Imrali Prison for nearly 20 years. For most of that time, he was the sole prisoner held there, living under extremely heavy surveillance. His last meeting with his lawyers took place in 2011. Since that time, his legal team has submitted nearly 800 requests to meet with him— all of which have been [denied](#).

Kurdish activists have regularly appealed to European institutions, including the European Court of Human Rights and the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, to investigate his treatment, noting the history of human rights violations in Turkish prisons. Many find the institutional responses to be little more than symbolic. The CPT last [visited](#) Imrali in 2016, and the ECHR has rejected several applications

related to Ocalan's case.

Ocalan's last period of regular contact with the outside world occurred during the peace process between the PKK and the Turkish government that took place between 2013 and 2015. During that time, he met regularly with negotiating delegations, and a [letter](#) he wrote calling for peace was read publicly at a Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir. However, since the breakdown of this process and the escalation of the AKP government's crackdown on Kurds and broader civil society, he has been isolated once again.

In recent months, Kurdish activists and politicians have gone on hunger strike to protest this policy, following the example of [Leyla Guven](#)— an imprisoned HDP MP from Hakkari who began her hunger strike in November. Guven called Ocalan's treatment a "crime against humanity," and announced that she would continue her action indefinitely until the policies of isolation were 'terminated.' "I will continue my protest until the judiciary ends its unlawful decisions...If need be, I will turn this protest into death fast," she said in her last court hearing.

Guven is now in critical condition, but was able to speak with her daughter on the phone as of yesterday.

Other individuals, including an HDP member in Erbil, a group of activists in Strasbourg, and several groups of Kurdish political prisoners held in prisons across Turkey, have also undertaken indefinite hunger strikes. Protests in solidarity with the strikers have been held in Turkey, in northeast Syria, and across Europe.

The scale and duration of the strikes likely forced Turkish authorities to concede to the meeting.