

Kurds promise to continue hunger strikes after Ocalan meeting

by Meghan Bodette - 14/01/2019 17:16



Kurdish politicians and activists who went on hunger strike to protest the treatment of imprisoned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan have promised to continue their resistance, following the announcement that Ocalan was allowed his first visitor in three years on Saturday. While the news was met with celebrations across Northeast Syria and other Kurdish regions, the hunger strikers and their supporters remain clear-eyed about the goals of their campaign and the meeting's relationship to those goals.

Imprisoned Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) MP Leyla Guven, who has been on hunger strike since November 7th, said that "such a meeting does not mean the end of the isolation on Mr. Ocalan." She noted that his last meeting, in 2016, was the result of similar protests— but did not lead to any real change.

"In 2016, 50 Kurdish started politicians an indefinite hunger strike to end the isolation. AKP allowed Ocalan's brother to meet with him, but the isolation was not ended," she

wrote in a letter published by Kurdish news outlets.

According to Guven's lawyers, her health has deteriorated significantly over the past several days. She has a high fever, and her blood pressure and heart rate are low.

Guven promised to continue her action until her own death if necessary. "I declare that I am living and breathing a life that I would die for, and that we are glad to embrace death for this cause. I bring to you our belief that we will succeed," she wrote in another [statement](#).

Activists on hunger strike across Turkey and Europe also [promised](#) to continue their actions [indefinitely](#), reaffirming that the single meeting did not constitute an end to what they have termed the "isolation" of Ocalan. A group of strikers in Strasbourg have gone without food for 29 days, and 231 political prisoners in Turkey are on the 31st day of their [action](#).

The Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) [analyzed](#) the meeting as a "special war trick" intended to end the hunger strikes and pacify resistance, stressing that a single meeting did not constitute a policy change. "The meeting held in Imrali on January 12 does not mean the ending of the isolation. Thus, the aggravated fascist repression and isolation imposed upon Leader Abdullah Öcalan in Imrali is continuing...The resisting comrades, our people and friends should not interpret it wrongly. The January 12th meeting was an attempt made as part of the special psychological war developed by the AKP-MHP government to sabotage [the campaign]," their statement read.

With local elections approaching in Turkey and Turkish officials making repeated threats against Northeast Syria, it is unlikely that the meeting heralds any shift in Turkish policy towards the Kurdish people inside or outside of its borders. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan has continued to refer to Syrian Kurds as "terrorists," and crackdowns on supporters of Turkey's Kurdish opposition— including demonstrators protesting in solidarity with Guven— remain as common as ever.