

The End of Democracy in Turkey - Erdogan wants to shut down the third largest party in parliament

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Last night the purge of President Erdogan against our party has reached another peak: our Co-Chairs Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yüksekdag, along with 11 further Members of Parliament of our party have been detained across Turkey last night. More arrests are to be expected. The goal of these measures is to shut down the third largest party in parliament. This is a dark day not only for our party but for all of Turkey and the region as it means the end of democracy in Turkey.

Ever since our party reached a historic victory during the national elections of June 7, 2015 where we succeeded to enter parliament despite the undemocratic 10% threshold, President Erdogan has singled out our party as the main target of his authoritarian policies. The reason is our principled opposition against his goal to introduce a presidential system in Turkey. Our seats in parliament are the biggest obstacles to the necessary constitutional changes. Thus, he simply ordered new elections in November 2015. Despite a series of violent assaults by “unknown perpetrators” on our party members and infrastructure, we managed once again to surpass the threshold on November 5, 2015 and won 59 seats in Parliament. Since he could not re-order elections another time, President Erdogan initiated the lifting of the immunity of our MPs in May 2016. As he could not prevent us from entering Parliament, he now orders us into prison.

Thousands of members, executives, elected mayors and city council members affiliated with the HDP and/or our sister party DBP have already been sent to prison on groundless charges since our electoral victory in June 2015. Yet the coup attempt on July 15, 2016 and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency has been the welcome opportunity for President Erdogan to eliminate all opposition. There is no freedom of expression and no freedom of press, no academic freedom, and no fair and independent judicial system any more. With government decrees gaining the power of law, over 170 media outlets critical of Erdogan have been banned. More than 130 journalists are in prison, including world-renowned authors and intellectuals. Most recently, two Kurdish news agencies and several Kurdish dailies were closed down and the chief-editor, columnists and journalists of the daily Cumhuriyet have been detained. More than 80,000 people have been detained since July 15, and about half of them are in prison now.

On November 30, Ms. Gülten Kisanak and Mr. Firat Anli, elected co-mayors of Diyarbakir from our party, were arrested and sent to prison. A district governor from Ankara was appointed to run the municipality. With this, the number of Kurdish municipalities run by bureaucrats appointed by the central government increased to 28. About 30 democratically elected Kurdish mayors are now in prison, and about 70 of them were dismissed by the central government.

We strongly condemn the detainment of our Co-Chairs Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yüksekdağ, as well our Members of Parliament Nihat Akdoğan, Nursel Aydoğan, Idris Baluken, Leyla Birlik, Ferhat Encü, Selma Irmak, Sirri Süreyya Önder, Ziya Pir, Imam Tascier, Gülser Yildirim, Abdullah Zeydan and demand their immediate release. The manufactured charges against them and all other party members must be dropped.

History has shown over and over again that any power based on brute force is outlived by the struggle for justice and freedom. We will not surrender to these dictatorial policies and call upon our friends around the world to stand in solidarity in our struggle to prevent Erdogan to steer the country into a civil war and further despotism.

Hisyar Özsoy

Vice Co-chair of HDP Responsible for Foreign Affairs

Deputy for Bingöl

November 4, 2016

* <http://www.hdp.org.tr/en/english/statements/the-end-of-democracy-in-turkey/9189>

Messages from our Co-Chairs and MPs

The messages by our Co-Chairs and MPs through their lawyers:

Selahattin Demirtaş:

I would first like to extend my warmest love and regards to all friends. Our unlawful arrest has merely added to the deep darkness our country is being dragged into every day. However, those who think that they can force us to surrender in this darkness should know very well that a single matchstick, a single candle is enough to illuminate this darkness. Whatever our place and conditions may be, we will continue, if necessary, to burn like a candle for our people to live in peace in a free future. Everyone should continue their work as part of the struggle for democracy, and must struggle without a pause to lift this darkness for our bright future. My spirits are high, my health is good. With my love.

Figen Yüksekdağ:

Despite everything, they can't consume our hope, or break our resistance. Whether in prison or not, the HDP and us, we are still Turkey's only option for to freedom and democracy. And that's why they are so afraid of us. Do not, not a single one of you, allow yourself to be demoralized, do not drop your guard, do not weaken your resistance. Do not forget that this hatred and aggression is rooted in fear. Love and courage will definitely win. With my warmest love and regards.

İdris Baluken:

Our people should remain high in spirits, I salute our people who have refused to abandon their honour, and we will no doubt protect our honour as well. It is not us who should be here in prison, but those who devised this conspiracy and set-up against us. They even refuse to reveal our location in order to marginalize us. This is a policy of hostage-taking, of abduction. We know from history

that such dictatorships, such approaches have always collapsed, they are doomed to oblivion. As we retain our stance, their fate will be the same. We will continue our struggle wherever we are. My regards to our people.

Ferhat Encü:

This is a struggle; thousands of prisoners have fallen in the name of this struggle. We do not hold ourselves any different than them. This is a violent wave of attack. It can only be repelled by resistance. And so we resist here, and we will continue to do so. No one should lose hope, only those who keep their hope alive are able to withstand this tyranny. Hope is also found in our unity, in our togetherness. The dignified resistance our people have sustained against fascism will emerge victorious. No one can say 'I am free,' in a country where our Co-Leaders have been taken hostage. I would like to extend my warmest love and regards to our people.

Gülser Yıldırım:

No matter what the AKP dictatorship does, it will neither be able to put us off our struggle nor the values we believe in. The dictatorship's inhuman practices are further sign of how legitimate we are in our struggle against it. I want our people to know that our determination is stronger now. Greetings and warm regards.

Leyla Birlik:

This is a difficult period, it is a coup. We will resist here, in prison, and outside. And we will certainly prevail. Greetings.

Nursel Aydoğan:

Our arrests are part of the liquidation of the HDP. It should not be forgotten that the HDP is a party with a cause. Even if we are in prison, we will uphold our cause and our struggle. No one's spirits should be dampened because of our arrests, no one should ever, ever lose hope. No matter what the AKP does, we will keep our spirits high. Our hopes will only be greater still.

Selma Irmak:

The AKP coup is now clearly visible for all to see. This coup aims to block the path of the democracy front. It is an even more sinister coup than the '80 coup. This is the fear they possess of the wide, developing opposition. The resistance will continue, our people will resist outside, and we will resist here. Prisons have [always] been our second address. I send my special regards to my woman friends. Women will be the nightmare of the AKP. I call upon our people to claim their future. We call upon the people of Turkey and Kurdistan to resist. With my love and regards.

Our lawyers have not been able to meet with Abdullah Zeydan yet since he was taken to Edirne Prison late last night.

November 6, 2016

* <http://www.hdp.org.tr/en/english/news/news-from-hdp/messages-from-our-co-chairs-and-mps/9200>

Demirtaş: This empire of fear will no doubt be dispersed soon.

The fact that we, along with our members of parliament, were taken hostage as the result of what amounts to a civilian coup d'état is not merely an attack on us as individuals.

This is a new step taken by those who have, step by step, implemented various plots to consolidate a one-man rule [in Turkey].

It should not be forgotten that this attack, aimed at us, defenders of a sisterly, equal, free and peaceful life in our country, is also a joint-attack on all forces of democracy.

There is no doubt that the only way out is to stand shoulder to shoulder whatever the circumstances may be against such regimes, and to spread the common struggle against fascism.

We expect and wish that the European public and Europe's democratic institutions display a much more effective and productive stance against these unlawful acts of oppression.

This empire of fear will no doubt be dispersed soon. We will continue our struggle under all conditions and without losing our faith in democratic politics. Even if we are between four walls, we will continue to be part of the struggle outside, and benefit from the joy of the never ending halay of freedom -never forgetting that we are all under the same sky.

I would like to extend my special regards and love to all my comrades, to our youth and to our women friends.

Selahattin Demirtaş, 7 November 2016

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<http://www.hdp.org.tr/en/english/news/news-from-hdp/demirtas-this-empire-of-fear-will-no-doubt-be-dispersed-soon/9208>

We Will Win - No Matter What!

We would like to begin our statement by first condemning the bomb attack that took place in Diyarbakır on November 4, 2016. We wish mercy on those who lost their lives and extend our condolences to their relatives and to our people. We wish a swift recovery to the injured and would like to state that we share their pain.

We salute our Co-Chairs, our Members of Parliament and all our elected co-mayors and executives who were taken hostage on November 4 or before. We support the dignified, upright, unyielding and indomitable stance they have maintained. **Their stance against oppression, tyranny, denial and fascism is a great source of morale not only for the Kurdish people, but for all the peoples of Turkey, consolidating their resolution and determination in the struggle.**

1. Today, the Erdoğan-AKP government, with its massive attacks on democratic politics and the democratic opposition, aims to usurp democratic political gains, and to purge all our existing institutions and establishments. They target not only the political will of more than 6 million who voted for the HDP, but also millions of our conscientious and democratic citizens who continue the

struggle for democracy, freedom, equality, labour rights, women's liberation and justice.

The Erdoğan-AKP government first lifted the immunity of Members of Parliament. Then it took the July 15 coup d'état attempt as an opportunity to rule the country under a State of Emergency and by decree laws, thus carrying out their own coup d'état. It has disempowered the parliament so that it can transform Turkey into a 'Republic of Appointed Trustees'. Most recently, this government has shown that it has no respect whatsoever to the choice and will of the people by arresting 9 of our deputies, including the Co-Chairs of our party. Our headquarters in Ankara is under siege while our party administrators and members are continuously prevented from entering the headquarter building. All of these government actions show what kind of perspective they have on democratic politics.

2. Confronted with the yet darkest and most comprehensive attack in our democratic political history, we have resolved in a joint meeting of HDP Parliamentary Group and HDP Central Executive Committee today to halt all our legislative activities at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT). We will deliberate on our final position at the GNAT in consultation with our peoples across Turkey.

In the coming days, we will visit neighbourhoods, villages, districts and provinces and go from door to door, listening to the complaints and proposals of our people. We will hold debates with our party's constituent institutions, with all our allies, institutions and establishments, with the forces of democracy, peace and labour, with civil society organizations, with labour unions and professional associations, with faith groups, and with women's movements, environmental and ecological movements and listen and assemble their proposals.

We will then, at the end of all these consultations, assess all proposals and share the results with the public. We will not only share them; we will also take the necessary steps to weave the future together in line with the proposals that emerge. Against the 'Republic of Appointed Trustees,' we will increase our struggle for a 'Democratic Republic'.

3. The HDP, with all its institutions and establishments, alliances, constituents, Co-Chairs, Members of Parliament, members and organizations is the guarantee of the existence and progress of democratic politics and democratic opposition in Turkey. To take hostage our friends who struggled for peace and resolution, democracy and freedom, justice and equality, to imprison them, shall never change our principled stance regarding this. Such acts will never force us to take a step back in our struggle in the field of democratic politics.

The path for all the peoples, faiths and cultures of Turkey to live together, equally, and in peace is through the existence and strengthening of the HDP and its alliances. The government may imprison those who want peace, those who raise their voices for democracy, justice and freedom, or our Co-Chairs, and may envisage extending its existence through violent means, but this will not deter us from our democratic political struggle.

In the last year and a half, the Erdoğan-AKP government has laid waste to the entire country for its aim of realizing a 'Turkish-style Presidential regime'. It has caused the death, injury, displacement and loss of employment of thousands of people and led to an increase in the tension and polarization. We once again very clearly underline the fact that what is presented to the public as a 'Turkish-style Presidential regime' is a 'one-man rule', it is fascism, and it means war, oppression, unrest and tyranny.

4. This is our call to all the forces of democracy, democratic institutions and establishments, parliaments, political parties and civil society organizations across the

world: Demand that the government in Turkey adheres to principles of universal human rights and democratic law! Raise your voice, show your political stance, and do not yield to Erdoğan's threats! The Erdoğan-AKP government is dragging Turkey step by step towards a totalitarian regime where universal human rights are disregarded and international democratic conventions are violated. The failure to raise a voice now will also constitute a great threat to all the countries in the region, and to the peoples of Europe.

We call on Turkey's forces of democracy, labour and peace, and to all our conscientious citizens suffocated by the oppression and injustice of the Erdoğan-AKP government: Our call is not merely a call for solidarity with the HDP. **Our call is a call for a common struggle shoulder to shoulder with everyone who has worked for freedom, equality, democratic secularity and justice, and has paid the price for their yearning.**

We know very well that our common yearning has high social legitimacy. Therefore, against the November 4 coup d'état that has targeted democratic politics, democratic opposition and the democratic gains of the different peoples, faiths, cultures and the women's liberation movement of Turkey, we are determined to develop our struggle in solidarity with all the forces of democracy and peace.

We will not bow down to this regime and its practices; we will continue to spread our proposals for democracy in defiance of this dictatorship. Lest we forget, we, all of us, are Turkey's hope; we are its light of democracy and freedom. We will nourish this hope and light together.

WE WILL WIN -NO MATTER WHAT!

HDP Central Executive Committee

HDP Parliamentary Group

Diyarbakir, 6 November 2016

* <http://www.hdp.org.tr/en/english/statements/we-will-win---no-matter-what/9199>
