

PEACE IN KURDISTAN CAMPAIGN

Press Release, 7 December 2010

Kurdish community leaders questioned by MI5 officers

Peace in Kurdistan has been informed that over the last few days several leading members of the Kurdish community in the UK have been questioned by members of MI5.

As far as we can establish to date, a total 15 individuals were visited at their homes by officers who identified themselves as British security. They informed our Kurdish friends that their movements had been under surveillance for some time and that some of their activities constituted a breach of UK law. Furthermore they were instructed that they should cease these activities forthwith.

There has been absolutely no suggestion that the individuals involved have been engaged in any criminal or illegal activities whatsoever. The questioning was extremely specific and referred to their relations with their community in London and around the UK and their open solidarity work in support of the Kurdish movement back in Kurdistan.

Peace in Kurdistan is extremely concerned at this latest development which we believe amounts to a further attempted criminalisation of the Kurds.

We note that these intensified security operations come at a time when the Home Office is reviewing the country's anti-terrorism legislation and the new Coalition government is seeking to impose a system of asset-freezing on individuals it deems associated with 'terrorism'.

These actions against the Kurdish community are tantamount to a psychological warfare, and appear designed to instil a mood of fear among the people and to deter their engagement in legitimate political activity.

These incidents once again expose the fundamentally unjust nature of the UK's current anti-terrorist legislation and its misguided foreign policy which supports repression abroad in the erroneous name of fighting alleged "terrorist" threats.

Peace in Kurdistan insists that the root of the problem lies in the failure on the part of Turkey and its allies in UK and Europe to acknowledge the denial of the basic rights of existence to the Kurdish people under the Turkish constitution and its state ideology.

The numerous opportunities for peace between Turkey and the Kurds offered, for example, by the latest Kurdish ceasefire and the constructive proposals for a just settlement repeatedly made by Kurdish leaders remain unreciprocated.

At the heart of the problem is the refusal on the part of the British authorities to fully address the legitimate demands of the Kurds for democratic and social rights and their failure to use available diplomatic channels to persuade the Turkish authorities to find a political and negotiated solution to the Kurdish conflict. It is equally vital to understand the nature of the solidarity and cohesiveness of the Kurdish people around their leading organisations and political leadership of Abdullah Ocalan and the Kurdistan Workers' Party. The spirit of the Kurdish people cannot be broken by threats and intimidation.

Impartial observers will only construe this intensified targeting of Kurds as an attack on the entire Kurdish community. It may intimidate and disturb many innocent people but we are convinced that it will take more than this to break the will of the Kurds as a community to stand up for their rights. It will certainly not force them to bow down and accept the historic injustice inflicted on their people.

Peace in Kurdistan is determined to redouble its efforts for a just peace for Kurds in Turkey and calls on the British government to engage constructively with the legitimate representatives of the Kurdish people in the UK and in Kurdistan.

We further call on the UK government to realise that its current anti-terrorism legislation, in particular the proscription of the PKK, stands as an obstacle to achieving peace and in fact only criminalises the whole Kurdish community by preventing them from freely expressing their opinions and showing solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the Kurdish movement back in their homeland.

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