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The latest message from Ocalan and my opinion

Zaher Baher

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The latest of Ocalan's messages,¹² 'calls for a ceasefire', are good news. It offers great hope and opportunity not just for the Kurdish community in Turkey, but also in fact for all communities there.

I support Ocalan's message, although it has come very late. I hope Erdogan, president of Turkey takes it seriously.

No doubt the Turkish state renewing hostilities in July 2015 cost the Kurdish people in Turkey almost everything. I was against it. In fact, I believe it was instrumental in completing Erdogan's policy, destroying Kurdistan in Turkey further. Some of my posts in Facebook and my articles are witness to that. It has been a terrible war, not just damaging the Kurdish territory in Turkey. It also destroyed a part of Iraqi Kurdistan and made the position of Rojava, currently the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, weak too.

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¹ A couple of messages from Ocalan. First one on 07/08 by his lawyers and the second one on 12/08 through his brother, Mohamed.

² <http://www.freeocalan.org/news/english/ocalan-statement-august-2019>

Unfortunately, the Turkish government have not acknowledged the message from Ocalan. The message from Ocalan is offering the state of Turkey a ceasefire and urgent talks. It shows that the Kurdish in Turkey do not want war, they want peace. In addition, it shows clearly that Ocalan's position that was in doubt about this armed struggle for a long time is now clear. He is against the war. He knows the struggle by arms won't get the Kurdish people anywhere. He knew that what had been achieved previously, has now all been lost.

The following is my reading from the messages:

Was Ocalan supporting the war?

I personally never believed that Ocalan wanted this new war. Those of us who are aware of Ocalan's principles, his knowledge of the situation and his project: gender equality, democratic confederalism and ecology, understand Ocalan's project will fail if the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) does not dissolve and stop their guerrilla war.

He is not an idiot or naive politician. He analysed the Bakur region [the Kurdish part of Turkey] in detail. He knows very well that the existing political parties and the continuation of the war are preventing him from implementing his project. He also knows too the state of Turkey is against his entire project.

What are Ocalan's messages are telling us?

In his first message Ocalan says, "He can resolve the problems and possibly terminate the war in the matter of a week".

First, the messages mean he has absolute power to make the most important decisions, without the need to discuss with other PKK leaders. He is the only one can do that.

Second; many PKK members including some of the leaders received this message and analysed it positively, regarding it as good news and thinking it is the best way forward.

Here we can see the PKK's dilemma. Ocalan may know the majority of the PKK leaders are in favour of armed struggle, either because they do not believe in peace or simply because they have no authority or cannot collectively make important

decisions like this. In any of these cases why should Ocalan be bothered to go back to them?

The current attitude of the PKK regarding Ocalan's calls for a ceasefire is confusing and contradictory. In the first place they responded with violence to the war imposed by Erdogan. Then they agreed with every word that Ocalan said in his messages. Here it is not clear whether this means they are being self-critical regarding what they have done or simply they have no other choice except obeying Ocalan's call. Whichever it is the PKK have changed their tactics and strategy.

The people in the PKK from leaders to below them have played a crucial role. They have not been in prison like Ocalan; therefore, they should have made this decision a long time ago, not waiting for Ocalan to make it for them. It is surprising that after more than four years of disastrous conflict they realised Ocalan's decision is the right one and they should follow it.

In this circumstance many questions arise:

Why were they silent for so long, allowing this disastrous war to continue? Why, after hundreds of people became victims of the war, thousands more forced to leave their land, the destruction of almost every single city and some of the towns, losing anything that had been achieved previously, why let all this happen? What was the justification of letting Erdogan engage them in this terrible war? Did this war bring peace and prosperity to Bakur? Did it take forward the movement of PKK and Kurdish question? Or did it just simply take the situation back to the years of 90s? Was continuing this armed struggle resolving the Kurdish question and developing the mass movement in Bakur and the rest of Turkey?

Others, in our support of Bakur and Rojava and I criticised the PKK, this was because we knew from the very beginning the war neither served Kurdish nation, nor the rest of the population in Turkey. They did not like our critique about them, they tried to justify their guerrilla war in different ways, mak-

ing accusations about us they could not substantiate. Why should they do that?

Conclusion

It is true that the justice and prosperity party, (AKP), its leader Erdogan and its state are in a deep crisis. However, as I said before the PKK is in a deeper crisis³. Erdogan is a cunning, clever politician; his policies toward his friends and enemies have so far been very successful. For the last five years he has managed to manipulate and deceive opposition in Turkey, Isis, Russia, US, western countries, neighbouring countries and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Up to now he has played a very successful role.

Whatever we say and write about the fascist state of Turkey, it doesn't change the fact that Turkey is still in a very strong position in comparison to the PKK that finds itself in a very weak position. Ocalan knows this very well. He knows it is the right time to call for a ceasefire and try to make peace with the Turkish state to resolve the problems peacefully. He knows without a peace agreement and negotiation with Erdogan's government, Erdogan is highly likely to invade Rojava soon directly or indirect by establishing Syria safe zone.

If the ceasefire and negotiations with the Turkish state take place, it could lead to the release of political prisoners, prevent Turkey's attack on Rojava and also could raise the question of the withdrawal of Turkey from Afrin on the negotiation table in the second stage of talks. It is also a way to stop reviving Isis in the area. A ceasefire and talks can stop the attacks on Turkey's military and its fighter jets on Qandil's mountains in Iraqi Kurdistan and the villages in the area and Maxmor. It can also defuse the rumour of a pact between Iran, Turkey, KRG and possibly Iraq that they want to attack the PKK in Qandil.

³ <http://zaherbaheer.com/2019/05/08/pkk-can-seize-this-opportunity-before-president-erdogan-grab-it/> <http://zaherbaheer.com/2017/12/30/where-is-the-kurdistan-workers-party-pkk-heading/>

After all these achievements, the talks may prepare a time and climate to implement Ocalan's project.

In my opinion Erdogan is in no hurry to respond to Ocalan's offer or he may not even take it seriously as he thinks his government is in much stronger position than PKK. In this case Erdogan needs to be pressurised by many sides to accept the offer.

However, in the event that Erdogan does not accept the offer, Ocalan should still end this lost war. The PKK needs to transform itself from a military force into a social force, from guerrilla war to civil resistance and from a fighting movement to a social movement.