

# Forum on the Women's Revolution of North and East Syria

“Through women's solidarity we will protect and develop  
the achievements of the women's revolution”

Collection of speeches from the forum



*Jineoloji*

## Collection of speeches from the Forum of the Women's Revolution

In this brochure we have collected the speeches given at the Forum of the Women's Revolution.

On July 19, 2022, the Women's Revolution of North and East Syria celebrated its 10th anniversary. On this occasion, various women's organizations in North and East Syria jointly organized a forum on 10 years of the Women's Revolution.

The forum was organized by Kongra Star, Womens gathering Zenobia, Syrian Women's Counsel, Women's Cousil of North and East Syrian, Syriac Women's Union and Jineoloji Academy and was held on July 22 and 23, 2022 at Rojava University premises. More than 200 women from all over Syria participated. The slogan of the forum was: Through women's solidarity we will protect and develop the achievements of the women's revolution. The forum assessed the situation of women before and after the revolution, evaluated the struggle of women in the last 10 years and discussed the future together.

We dedicate the forum and this brochure to the martyr Jiyan Tolhildan, the martyr Roj Khabur and the martyr Barîn Botan in the name of all women who gave their lives for the revolution.

YPJ commander Jiyan Tolhildan participated as a speaker on the first day of the forum and spoke about YPJ and women in self-defense. She participated in the forum as a delegate and representative of the YPJ with Roj Khabur and Barîn Botan. They could not attend the second day of the forum because they were attacked by the drones of the fascist Turkish state when they returned from the first day of the forum.

Commander Şehîd Jiyan Tolhildan said in her speech on the first day of the forum: 'We as YPJ renew our commitment in front of this forum and all these women. As long as there are attacks on women, we will carry our weapon with us. Step by step, front by front, we will liberate this region, this is what we promise to our friends and enemies. This revolution will surely become a reality for women of the whole world.'

Martyr Jiyan Tolhildan and her comrades lived and fell for the revolution. With this thought and conviction, all the participants of this forum promised to follow the path of their fallen friends to fulfill their dreams and hopes. The martyrs are immortal in our struggle, in our hearts and in the achievements of the women's revolution.



## Opening speech of the Forum on the Women's Revolution of North and East Syria

by Remziye Mihemed - Kongra Star spokeswoman

We welcome all the women from Rojava, North and East Syria, all over Syria and the Middle East who are present today in this forum on women's revolution. First of all, we congratulate all our people and all women for the revolution of July 19th. In particular, we congratulate the families of the martyrs, the partners and children.

Today we can look back on 10 years of revolution full of work, effort and struggle with women in the vanguard, 10 years that have been successfully completed. We are entering the 11th year, and with great successes and determination year after year it is possible today that women from different groups and organizations from all over Syria could be present here today. The spark of the revolution was lit in Kobane and this spark is moving forward day by day like a river and spreading across Rojava, Kurdistan, and North and East Syria.

Our goal is that it becomes the heritage of all Syria and an example for the whole world. This example expresses the light of Syrian women who have experienced a lot of violence and oppression from ISIS. Innumerable physical and systemic attacks were made against us. But there was always resistance. Women have always been at the forefront. And this is the legacy of more than 30 years of struggle. Kurdish women have become a vanguard, and we are evolving this into a legacy that all Syrian women can benefit from. With women's solidarity and struggle, we can defend our revolution and reignite it. We have reached a stage where it is necessary not only to secure the achievements of our revolution, but to stand up for and defend our achievements. We all know that there are very fierce attacks against women who are the pioneers of the revolution. Hevrîn Khalef, Zehra and Mother Emine, like Hebûn, Hind and Saade, were all targeted. The martyrs are the highest value of our revolution. Martyrs who wrote incomparable stories in North and East Syria, like Arîn Mîrkan, Barîn and Avesta, like Silava, who was the first martyr in Afrin.

The revolution moved to all cities in North and East Syria. Day after day, when cities were liberated, the women of these cities saw the fighters of the YPJ as a beacon of light. They looked to these women fighters in whom they saw hope for freedom. These women are the ones who defend the revolution and liberate women, giving all their power and devoting their lives. Little by little, all the women in northern and eastern Syria have shown that they exist, and have organised themselves. Day by day, more and more groups in this region have organised themselves politically and socially. They were able to organise themselves in the social sphere and play an important role in the revolution. The best example of this is the system of the Autonomous Administration, self-organised by the people. Women have taken their place in all decision-making processes and have been able to introduce the Co-Chair system. It has been proven that women are not secondary, but can be our representatives.



It is the hope of all women who are here today or listening online that the revolution will be strengthened. Our hope for all the women present is that the result of this forum will be that together we will fulfill the hopes of the peoples, strengthen the revolution and stand up for the dreams of the martyrs. On this occasion, we welcome you all once again. And we congratulate all women on the 10th anniversary of the revolution of July 19th. We congratulate all the peoples of Syria and the world. We say welcome.

## Evaluation of the political situation worldwide and in the region

by Foza Yusuf - Member of the Committee of the Democratic Union Party PYD

Good morning! Truly, seeing all of you here today gives me hope that we can build a very bright world. For this reason, I warmly welcome all of you. And we hope that this forum will produce very important results for our revolution and our future. 10 years have passed since the beginning of this revolution, during which we have fought a very great battle. A great war has been waged and in these 10 years we have suffered great sacrifices. Women have made these sacrifices for the freedom of all women. For this reason, before I begin my speech, I would like to remember all the women who fought and gave their lives in the struggle for freedom. We are indebted to them because they created these liberated spaces and moments of freedom for us with their own blood. In these personalities are symbols of the women's revolution- Heval Şilan, Azîmê, Şervîn, Zeyneb, Arin, Zilan, Sakine Cansiz, Destina, Viyan, Zehra, Gulan - we remember all the martyrs who fell for the women's revolution. I also remember and bow to the internationalist women who also participated in this revolution and were martyred.

Our world today is in great chaos because of the mentality of oppression, racism, fundamentalism and patriarchy that human beings have developed, leaving our world today to face great dangers. Today we are facing the third world war, which undoubtedly did not start in Russia or Ukraine, but in our region. When we talk today about the millions of people who have become refugees, we talk about millions of women who have nothing, we talk about millions of children who have no place and no space. This is a result of the third world war that began in the Middle East. Today, this war is spreading all over the world. The war that is developing in Ukraine is the continuation of the war by the dominant male who never tires of war and spreads throughout the world in the deadliest way. Because of the oppressive system of capitalist modernity, which thrives off oppression and exploitation, committing genocide, abandoning women to destruction, today there is an intense war. Powers vie to dominate the world. This war that is being waged today in Ukraine is not the war of peoples and not the war of women. The war that is being waged in Ukraine, in the Middle East and in our region is not our war, because it is not a war that is serving the peoples, the oppressed and women. On the contrary, this war is waged by capitalist modernity, by hegemonic forces, which are set against women, against people, against children, against nature, against the economy. It has put all the values of humanity before itself and is destroying and annihilating them. We see that every day very serious diseases are spreading. This system of capitalist modernity fights us not only with weapons, but also with diseases, with biological warfare, with economic warfare that increases poverty. It creates terrible situations as a result of the destruction of nature. We see that today the world is on fire. Everywhere it burns, also in the centers of capitalist modernity. For a few days we have been observing that even London is burning. This brutal and uncontrolled war intensifies oppression, slavery and violence.

But this fire burns today also those whom light it. They are unable to defend themselves against



the fire. Because this fire is out of control. Therefore, we can say that the repressive system is currently on the verge of collapse in every respect and is sinking into chaos, because instead of creating solutions, it is intensifying the problems.

Instead of freedom, it reinforces slavery. Instead of bringing security, it intensifies wars. You see, today even those countries that have not put much emphasis on armaments or the defence system are forced to start doing so. Today, the whole world is struggling to acquire weapons, it is a question of 'Who gets weapons and how many?' This endangers humanity, and as a result nobody feels safe in this system anymore. Everyone is in danger and lives in doubt, not knowing what will come next. 'Which country will explode?' In the last 5 months, more than 3 million people have been displaced from Ukraine.

In the last 10 years, millions of people have been displaced from Syria and hundreds of thousands have been killed. Today we can also say that Syria has become a prison where people are oppressed with bombings, hunger and brutal war.

During these years, this system has plunged many countries in the Middle East into great chaos. Today, the region is facing a major attack. Libya has been dismantled. Lebanon is going through a disintegration. Iraq held elections 9 months ago and still has not been able to form a government. Iran is ruled by a huge regime that is also facing great chaos due to the undemocratic system inside. Turkey wants to defend the nation state through daily onslaughts of fascism. Yesterday, you all saw a mass murder of children and women being committed in Duhok. The Turkish state tries to solve its problems with war. Afghanistan is also the result of such a system. After the U.S. left Afghanistan, you saw mothers throwing their children into the arms of the soldiers. This showed the true face of the US. The table of a child yesterday in Duhok whose mother let him go to save him; these are examples of daily attacks against the occupied territories in Afrin, Serekaniye and Gire Spi.

The assaults that take place every day against women, the brutal events that we face every day around the world, represent the truth of this system of the oppressive male. This is another reason why this world needs something new. It needs a revolution. It needs a new paradigm. It needs a new system. It needs a new mentality and new politics. Therefore, we say that the revolution of Rojava, Kurdistan, the revolution of women is very important and a great blessing for all the peoples of the region and the whole world. Today, with the perspective of free women, women's revolution, with the perspective of democratic nation, a shared equal life of the peoples, we say to the world: besides the capitalist system, patriarchy, this darkness, there is a life and you deserve it, there is another life, another way.

There is an alternative. For this reason, when the whole world looks here and says that hope lies in this small geographical place, it does not mean that our number is very high. The perspective and the goal of this revolution is very broad, of great value, very fascinating, and is like a medicine for humanity, for these diseases, like a light for the darkness. Truly, the patriarchal mentality has become entrenched and increases chaos. Instead, a new mentality is needed. With the women's revolution, the revolution of the Kurdish women first and later the women of Mesopotamia, the women of North and East Syria, we have made the decision that we will change this



world.

And we will create a new world. The women's revolution, the revolution against sexism, against fundamentalism, against racism, against the oppression of positivist science, against all this, has created a new perspective of freedom. This perspective, whose mental basis is Jineolojî, has made it possible that our power to struggle has increased, and that we can shake the world with this strength. Everyone is dissatisfied with this system, but they don't have a solution. But our struggle has a solution to solve the chaos that humanity is going through. For this reason, on the 10th anniversary of the Women's Revolution, we greet our friend, Abdullah Öcalan. One of the main reasons that he has been in prison for 23 years and has seen all kinds of inhuman torture, isolated in a room is the gift of the ideology of women's liberation and Jineolojî, the ideology of women's revolution that he has given us. We salute the friendship of Abdullah Öcalan, which is a true friendship. And we say, having lived true friendship with women, he never betrayed his friendships with women from childhood. And he has resisted all forms of violence until today. So we too will live true friendship with him. Because if we are not faithful to this connection, we contradict and betray our revolution. That is why we, as women of this region, are very happy today. And why? We are making history today. Our history, since the time of the goddesses until today, is the history of violence, slavery, and oppression. Full of the worst they imposed on us, a history of assaults. For 10 years we have written a new golden page for ourselves. Therefore, you are all very lucky, because you have become a page in this history, with your effort you have made steps on this path of freedom, you have been a part of it. At every stage of the revolution, women, all of you, have made sacrifices for this revolution.

This is a great joy for us, that today we can determine our future with our own will, our own language and our own mind, with our own feelings and our own intelligence. We discuss, we think freely, we think with a mentality of freedom. We finally believe in ourselves. You can't find that anywhere else in the world. A level that the women's revolution has developed in Rojava and North and East Syria does not exist anywhere else in the world today.

So we should know very well the value of it, because there are very big attacks against us. These bloodthirsty forces that kill children, women, people and nature are not happy about our achievements as women. As women, we have taken the lead in the revolution, in defence, in education, in politics, in social work, in justice, in all aspects of life. Now, we must make our revolution a social revolution so that we can overcome all outdated traditions, so that we can avert all threats to our existence. In 10 years of revolution, we must make our goal the strategy of defending women's revolution and women's revolutionary war. We must not tell ourselves that everything is fine, because this enemy who dismembered the body of the martyr Barin, they want to suffocate us. This enemy still wants to destroy us all. We should not fool ourselves. For this reason, these women who want freedom must be armed. If we do not turn ourselves into a weapon of freedom, they will turn us into a weapon and use us against ourselves. Today, all over the world, they have weaponized women and are using them against women. Advertising and commercialisation, rape culture and rape, assault and all kinds of terrible things exist to progress their special warfare. In order to make money, they have turned women's eyes, women's language, all parts of women into a weapon to use against them. For this reason, let us water



the seeds of freedom every day. Let us give our feelings the water of freedom every day. Let us educate ourselves every day on the soil of defence of freedom. Without defence, freedom does not become possible; without defense, the revolution will not remain.

Therefore, every woman must stand up for her freedom and her revolution. Every day we should remember the women of Afrin, every day we should remember the women of Serekaniye, Gire Spi, the women of Afghanistan. You have seen what they have done to them, in the last year, every day they have brought a disaster on the Afghan women, every day they have forbidden something new. Every day they put them in chains. Maybe if they had been able to defend the women's revolution and their strength, like in Rojava, they would not have been in this situation.

I would like to conclude. We congratulate the women's revolution, the people's revolution, the July 19th revolution. In these 10 years, we have achieved great success. Women have taken 50% of the places in all the institutions of the revolution. Women have developed the system of co-chair equal representation, and have fought day after day to strengthen it. Women have taken 70% of the educational work and played the pioneering role.

Women have offered the strongest resistance and shown great heroism in the self-defence forces. Women have developed the peoples' social contract and women's laws in these 10 years. In all fields, such as sports, culture, education, women have experienced an upsurge in the last 10 years. Something that we have not achieved in 100 years, we have achieved in 10. But that doesn't mean the revolution is over. The revolution is transforming from its childhood phase and entering its youth. It is with this kind of spirit that we should move.

We should leave behind inexperience and fight in a skillful way. We should overcome the individual revolution and make it a revolution of the whole society and all women. We have strength and willpower, we just have to believe in ourselves and our strength. We have proved many times in this revolution that there is nothing that can stand against our willpower. That is why we say: With the strength and willpower of women, we will make the 21st century the century of freedom and equality. And we will lead the way for all humanity for an ecological world, a world governed by democracy, a world where free women and free men can live in liberty, this is the kind of world we will create. In this sense we greet all the working women who are here today, all the women who have fought for this revolution, all the women who have fought in this revolution, all the Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian women, and our heroes: the YPJ, all women's defence forces, we salute them one more time, we congratulate them. And we say the 21st century will be the century of women. It will be the century of freedom for all peoples. Thank you very much!



## The Situation of Syrian Women Before the Syrian crisis

by Hêvî Mistefa - Former co-chair of Afrin canton

Ever since the beginning of human history until today, women have taken on one of the most influential human roles in societies and civilizations, and are an active part of the life and development of the community. They are the crucial part of maintaining the continuity of humanity, and protect it from extinction.

Many women have left their mark on the history of Syria, such as “Mauya, the greatest queen of Syria”, “Zenobia the leader”, “Cleopatra”, up until Syrian women of today. This is especially in light of the tragedy of the Syrian crisis, although it means they do not have enough space for freedom to express their positions on issues of politics, religion and society.

There have been many types of restrictions that have paralysed women’s movements, and the forms of these restrictions have been manipulated over time. Despite this, resistance has been relentless and women have continued to try to break these chains, deciding to become inspiring leaders rather than victims. Today we can confidently say that women have the most prominent role in popular revolutions against dictatorial regimes.

Throughout the history of Syria, there has been a feminist movement which had taken on a prominent role in ending the ottoman occupation, and also actively resisted French colonialism. This movement was organised within what are known as literary salons.

Examples are women such as Mary al-Ajmi (Damascus); Mrs. Nazik Zahra al-Abed; and Nabbaha, daughter of Ibrahim Hanano (and Um Abdo), who helped revolutionaries and were martyred in the battle of Qasr al-Athm.

There were also female figures who participated in political life: the likes of Soraya al-Hafez, who played a major role in women gaining the right to vote and stand for office.

However, this feminist movement declined and weakened during the period of military coups that Syria went through over the years. At the time of unity in 1958, a 2,000-member National Assembly was formed, that included just two women, Jihan al-Mosuli and Wedad Azhari. After the control of the Baath Party in 1963, the mass movement was oppressed and civil society institutions dominated; most of them, including associations concerned with women’s rights, were abolished. The Syrian regime’s media began to portray women as slaves who are subservient to men, merely obeying and satisfying their husbands only, however, we do not deny this reality for some women. The regime portrayed themselves as coming to save women from this injustice, and as we have seen, developed some secular characteristics.

We have to recognize the role of women in decision-making positions. Women were granted the right to vote in 1949, and the right to stand for office in 1953, but no women reached parliament until 1960. At first, 2 women won 2 seats out of 200 hundred in parliament. After March 8th, 1963, 8 seats were granted to women out of 95. In total we find that since the establish-



ment of the Syrian Parliament the percentage of women's seats rose from 8.2% to 11% in the last term of office.

The first female minister in the Syrian government was Najah Al-Hatar in 1975-1976, and two female ministers (Najwa Qasab Hasan and Khada Al-Jabi) were appointed in 2000.

According to the legal mechanisms, the head of state must be a Syrian, Muslim, and male; within the law women are excluded from these duties.

In the field of the judiciary, women have practiced law since 1952. Representation in the judiciary has reached 14%, and this percentage in all councils is due to the Constitution. Namely: Article 45 of the Permanent Constitution of Syria, which states: "The State shall guarantee all opportunities that allow women to contribute effectively and fully to political and social life and remove restrictions that prevent their development and participation in Arab socialist society". That is, it is not a guarantee of full equality, rather of an effective contribution.

It is no secret that women's participation in the economic and social sphere has weakened and that they are deprived of property because of customs and traditions. In the countryside, 82% of the agricultural land is owned by men and 2.10% by women, despite their active role in upholding land and values.

Whilst in education, the participation of women was good, in the primary level it is 64% and in the higher stages of education it is 50%. The percentage of women in university is about 20% of the teaching staff, but this percentage and contribution has not yet raised consciousness and sent a message on the principles of justice and gender equality. The educational curricula until recently continued to teach contents that promote gender differences, where women are sitting at home (Mama irons Mama washes, and Baba reads or goes to the field or laboratory). The educational system has failed to formulate a new personality and new attitudes for women.

Let's shed a little light on the legal aspect. Article 44 of the Constitution: "The state protects and encourages marriage, works to remove material and social obstacles, protects motherhood and childhood, and provides them with appropriate conditions". But there are many laws that contradict the articles of the constitution, gender inequality is evident in arbitrary divorce, polygamy, complacency in honor killings, the lesser value of women's testimony in court, nationality law, custody law, guardianship and inheritance, (Syria's law has a dual system that includes secular and religious courts, and personal status law is applied through Sharia courts), and polygamy and the testimony of two women. Although Syria has signed several conventions, including the Sidaa Convention on the Elimination of Negative Discrimination between men and women, it has reserved many of the provisions of this Convention, including in preserving the Nationality Law, which allows the father benefits that it does not grant to the mother. For example: A Syrian woman married to a non-Syrian man does not consider her children to be Syrians even if they were born on Syrian soil and resided there, while the children of a Syrian father married to a foreign woman are considered Syrians even if they were born outside Syrian territory. There are many examples that cannot be mentioned and explained because of the lack of time.



Kurdish Women Under the Arab Nation-State in Syria:

Kurdish women have suffered persecution in all its forms - national, socio-economic and legal - from the nation-state in addition to being persecuted by men and society. Kurdish women are doubly victimised; on the one hand victims of patriarchal society with its customs and traditions, and on the other hand victims of national and gender oppression.

The constitution, which states that the people of Syria are part of the Arab nation, entrenches national oppression, deprives Kurdish women and all women of other minorities and nations of their national identity, in addition to depriving them of their identity as women.

Furthermore, the unjust census project stripped more than two hundred and fifty thousand Kurdish citizens of Syrian citizenship and the right to citizenship, including women. This indicates the erasure and obliteration of ethnic identity. A state of emergency has been imposed since 1963 in the country, especially in Kurdish areas, paralysing political activity in general, and paralysing any female participation in the political field.

The Syrian government has also pursued a policy of Arabization and attempted cultural annihilation by prohibiting the mother language of other citizens, and making Arabic the official language. Article 21 of the Constitution states: "The system of education and culture aims to create a national, socialist, scientifically minded Arab generation linked to its land proud of its heritage, imbued with the spirit of struggle to achieve the goals of its nation in unity, freedom and socialism". This is clear evidence of the policy of Arabization and denial of other nationalities. It is also contrary to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Syria is a signatory, which states: "Any child has the right to learn in their mother tongue". This policy was adopted to erase the Kurdish identity, and to remove Kurdish women from decision-making positions within Kurdish parties as well.

On top of all this, dozens or even hundreds of women have been arrested and the fate of some of them is still unknown, such as Nazli Kajal. The first time in the history of Syria that women were tried in political cases was for two Kurdish women from Afrin. So a generation of girls began to grow up with the stories and heroism of militants such as the martyrs Sakine, Sarah and Zilan, with many bearing their names. These girls grew up and started to organize even more strongly, with the material and moral support of their mothers and families.

I remember security forces attacking the homes of Kurdish girls in high school and arresting them only because they were absent from school on March 21st, Newroz. I still remember what the mothers said to their daughters: "Go and be proud that the Political Security patrol arrested you, they have no moral justification". The percentage of education among girls increased and they started graduating from Syrian universities one by one, and they proved their worth in all fields.

Since the beginning of the Rojava revolution, Kurdish women have numbered thousands of martyrs and hundreds of detainees in the prisons of the Ba'ath regime. They have had their own women's organization, Kongra Star, founded in 2005. From the first day of the Rojava Revolution they have been engaged in the revolutionary struggle based on a revolutionary background and



a strong legacy.

Women took their place in all political, military and economic arenas and fields, therefore the Rojava revolution was called the women's revolution. Sometimes this is understood to just mean that women participated in the Rojava revolution, but this is not the truth. In fact women were participating in all revolutions around the world, and struggled and fell, but after the revolution ended, they returned disappointed to the houses without achieving their goals.

What distinguishes the Rojava revolution for women is that they struggle and participate as women. That they organise their own army, they are creating their own science (jineoloji), and gaining their rights within the revolution. They will not be deceived, nor told to wait until the revolution is over to demand rights.

To tell the story of the history of women's struggle needs a long time, but for lack of time we will be content with this. We hope that this seminar will be enriched by other contributions as well, and I would like to give the opportunity to my colleague Asia Abdullah to talk about the situation of women after the Rojava revolution in the regions of Rojava and North and East Syria.



## Evaluation of 10 years of Women's Revolution

by Asya Abdullah - Co-chairwomen of the Democratic Union Party PYD

First of all, we congratulate all the women in Syria, all the organizations and personalities on the 10th anniversary of the revolution. Women of the 19th July, who in these 10 years have accompanied and supported the revolution, who have given blood, sweat and tears so that we can live these days today. We salute them all. We salute all the martyrs of the struggle for freedom. So that we could live these days and proclaim our revolution, become a force ready for defence and organise ourselves in the path of our fallen martyrs. We remember all the martyrs and bow before them.

We see it as a strategic task for women everywhere that we are holding a forum today to mark the 10th anniversary of the women's revolution, because our revolution is based on the values and struggle of hundreds of years, in which women have sacrificed themselves again and again for freedom. The values that women and women's organizations have created throughout history are the values that our revolution advocates, and its legacy. In defending these values, the success of our revolution today is the success of all women. How did we organise during these 10 years of revolution? How did we start? How did we decide to make a revolution? How did we clarify the strategy of the revolution? These were all strategic decisions for women in general. Since 2012, all the women's organizations that are now also active in the liberated areas have invested work and effort.

In many different ways and with autonomous women's organizations like Yekitiya Star (Now Kongra Star), as well as women's work in political parties, a stance has been taken and a great resistance fought. But there were also very difficult conditions. We were not yet as well organized as we should have been. But as women of Rojava, we were able to make strategic decisions at the beginning of the revolution. Just as we have to act decisively and strategically against all the policies and mentalities that have worked against women for hundreds of years. If we want to fight against these policies, principles and laws that were written with the hands of men against women and women's struggle, that were put into practice by the system... If we do not organize against them, do not fight against them, then we cannot become an alternative or make revolution.

In 2012, we already had a rich heritage, and our revolution was essentially based on this heritage, the dedication of women, the dedication of revolutionary women. In the late 80s and especially in the 90s, a great wave of revolutionary women developed in Rojava. We see it expressed in the figures of Dicle Kobane, Shilan Kobane, in the personality of Zeyneb, Shervin, Dilan and Rehan, and hundreds of revolutionary women decided to walk the path of freedom in the most difficult times.

They went forward into all areas of freedom struggle, fought to defend women and the nation-



al values of Kurds and the peoples and started the revolution. For this reason, we can also say that these hundreds of vanguard women in this phase gave us the chance to become an organisation, a struggle, a willpower, an identity. Against the voices that say women cannot build a revolution, nor defend themselves or establish politics; the struggle of revolutionary women has made a great resistance. This had a great impact on society. This had an immense impact on families. For us, a possibility and opportunity was created so that we could develop women's organization and many years of work has been done to further this. This was the foundation on which in 2012 many evaluations of the women's movement were made, and many platforms were created. Yekitiya Star (Kongra Star) held its congress in 2013. There was discussion about, 'How can we make a revolution?' 'How will we prepare?' 'How will we make two revolutions together?' The revolution of women and the revolution of democratic people has been combined. On this basis, strategic decisions were made. One of the strategic decisions was that we cannot make a revolution or organise if women have no self defence. For this reason, with the vanguard of hundreds of young women, defence forces of the revolution were developed. With very few means, but a strong willpower. To carry out the revolution, village by village, neighbourhood by neighbourhood: preparations were made. These preparations included as strategic works: 1. Self-defence 2. Organising women with an autonomous identity

If we do not organise ourselves with an autonomous identity, we cannot create a democratic system in this country. If we do not organise ourselves, we cannot realise women's rights, defend ourselves, make decisions for ourselves, or create change. Without building a system with the identity of women against the oppression of men, none of this is possible. A strong struggle was waged against these boundaries that were clarified for women's lives. Perhaps at the beginning of the revolution, many said, "How could women make revolution?"

Many said that first the revolution must be completed, and then women should talk about their problems. This is also an argument that was put forward for a long time against women's struggle and organisation. But in this period, the decision was made that the women's revolution and the social revolution should be carried out together. The women's revolution and the revolution of democracy will be carried out together. The women's revolution and the national revolution will be carried out together. If a women's revolution does not develop, neither the democratic revolution nor a nation will develop. If the women's revolution does not develop, there will be no change in society, there will be no change in life. These thoughts, these mentalities that have worked against the will of women for centuries are resurging. The revolution of women is the revolution of consciousness. The revolution that was made in Northern and Eastern Syria has brought forward a mental revolution. Against all mentalities of oppression and centralism, a democratic revolution of mentalities was created. The women's revolution is essential and became the basis for the revolution in North and East Syria. The women's revolution was the basis for the project of Autonomous Administration in Northern and Eastern Syria. With this sense of self, women in North and East Syria have organised themselves.

One of the essential pillars of the women's revolution is women's solidarity. They united the power of women from all organisations and with this we achieved great success. We have reached a level where we are an example worldwide with the joint work and alliances of wom-



en in North and East Syria. The work of defense, building a democratic system in society, these were also essential works. Finally, the way opened for women so that they could join in all areas of struggle. They went to the places of freedom. Women were finally able to leave their home. The walls that stood in front of women were finally removed and spaces of freedom opened up, in which all women with their own essence, their own identity, thinking, and willpower can participate in all areas of the revolution and lead the struggle. This colourful mosaic of women here today is an expression of this. If we look today at the level of Syria, where perhaps more than 50 women's organisations, national identities, cultural identities and beliefs are together in this space today, we can say we have made revolution together.

Today we are evaluating 10 years of revolution together and demonstrating our future together. This is also a great success for all women from Syria, the region and for women everywhere. It was women who made great sacrifices in the revolution, worked hard, selfless, in all aspects of life and resistance. They were wives, mothers, YPJ members and now there are thousands of wounded who fought on the fronts of the resistance and sacrificed parts of their bodies.

These achievements were achieved with selfless sacrifices. The resistance that was created in our region is an example for the world. How was it created? On what foundations? On what thinking was it based? How was the strength and will developed to resist all attacks and succeed? Our revolution is based on the thought and philosophy of free life and free women, on the identity of free women. Our revolution was developed with the diversity of women, the thinking of women, the opinion and the power of women, the identity of women. Today, wherever these are achieved, women are present. Where these are not present, women's situation is very dangerous. Something like Shengal can happen again.

What is happening today against women in the occupied territories will be repeated. In Afrin, Serekaniye, Gire Spi (Tal Abyad), Idlib, Jarabulus, Al Bab, and Azas, femicide is being carried out today. An occupation like the present, whenever it has taken place in history, has been implemented through the annihilation of women, with femicide. We need to strengthen our struggle against these attacks that are perpetrated against women in the occupied territories. We must intensify our resistance. Our goal is to liberate all these women from the occupation, from the mercenary groups. Our goal, our commitment and our struggle will be to give an answer for women. So we will be a response to the efforts and resistance of the mothers and martyrs. We have a long struggle ahead of us. Maybe in these 10 years we have made a revolution that has reached a certain level, we became an identity, we became ourselves, today we are ourselves as women. With our strength, our thoughts and our willpower we are on our feet. These thoughts, the strength, the will and the philosophy that Abdullah Öcalan has put forward in the last 40 years for the whole struggle, for the freedom of women, for the defense of women and the organisation of women. This is a great strength for women everywhere today; based on this philosophy we can organise ourselves with our diversity and identity. We can intensify the struggle for freedom.

Where women have no strategy, no defense, have not created a system according to a free ideology, there is mass femicide worldwide. In order to prevent these massacres, to prevent



attacks, we must strengthen and increase what we have achieved so far, something that has become a foundation for our revolution. We as a women's organization and movement should strengthen the defense forces. This is the responsibility of all of us, against attacks we are all YPJ, HPC-Jin (Civil Defense Units). We are our own defense forces for our security in our villages, cities and neighborhoods. In politics, we represent the will of all women. Women should be part of political decisions, should be a strong force at the Syrian level, in solving the problems in Syria. For the organisation of society, we should expand our struggle because there are great dangers. We must strengthen the field of education and knowledge. We must strengthen all areas of life. When we say Jin Jiyan Azadî "women, life, freedom" it means that where there are no women, no women's self-defense, there is no life. Where there is no freedom for women, there is no life. In order for us to develop life everywhere, we should develop women's structures everywhere. We can develop women's knowledge, develop women's defense. Those who said in the past, and still say today, "The women's question concerns only women, and we can solve it" have been proven wrong. The women's question is the question of the whole society, of freedom, of the basis of society. If there is no freedom for women, there is no freedom in society.

If the women's question is not solved, the question of nations cannot be solved, the question of democracy cannot be solved. Under these conditions, our revolution has developed and we are where we are today. On the basis of these conditions, we can intensify our struggle. And we should wage a common struggle, against all perspectives that stand against women's freedom, their autonomous identity and struggle. We as women have a long history, a millennia-old struggle, which is a great heritage for us still today. The revolution of women in Rojava and North and East Syria is also a great success and strength for all women.

We can defend and elevate this revolution with our common struggle and solidarity, make it a home for all women. All the women who live in the occupied territories, who resist occupation in the prisons, who write stories of heroism against fascism in the free mountains, who were forcibly displaced and now live outside their villages and towns. We salute them all. Our struggle, our decisions and our resistance will always be aimed at fulfilling your hopes and aspirations and raising the flag of resistance against all the violence that is being done to you. We wish you all success.

## Achievements of the Women's Revolution in North and East Syria

by Sema Bektaş - Spokeswoman of the Democratic Union Party PYD

We welcome the tenth anniversary of the July 19 Revolution and enter a new phase of struggle based on the achievements of the Rojava Revolution. This revolution has brought about important changes and is considered one of the sacred revolutions of history; Rojava is no less important than the socialist revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century, whose influence was widespread and marked the whole century. The Rojava Revolution, based on moral principles, promotes a life in harmony with nature and the environment; it does not make itself the center of everything nor give itself the right to attack nature, as happens in capitalism for the greatest possible profit.

The Rojava Revolution, which took place at the beginning of the twenty-first century, has characteristics that distinguish it from previous revolutions, so that its effects will spread to all parts of the world and bring about historical developments. The Rojava Revolution is a symbol of our time that can realise the freedom of all humanity. The Rojava Revolution was known as a women's revolution with the slogan, "Woman, Life, Freedom", and with this slogan the freedom of the whole society will also be realised. Women participated in the people's resistance and uprising, made great sacrifices and bore responsibility for the revolution, in addition to fulfilling family duties.

We need to talk about the difficulties and oppression that women suffered under the Bais regime; there are women activists whose fate is still unknown today. But today, women can express their identity through the Kongra Star organization and the YPJ women's protection units. Women have proven themselves and played an important role in democratic politics and decision-making. The revolution in Rojava and northeast Syria became a light for women who aspire to a free life.

The achievements of the women's revolution have influenced all parts of the world. It has strengthened the spirits of revolutions and women's resistance. It should be remembered that the revolution in Rojava was strengthened by the Kurdish women's movement, which has been fighting for women's freedom for more than forty years. According to the ideas of Abdullah Ocalan, women could participate in the revolution and the progress of society on the basis of their free will, which freed them from thousands of years of slavery. The Kurdish woman and her Arab, Assyrian, Syrian, Chaldean, Armenian and Turkmen sisters have become the force of change, modernization and development of the society. Moreover, they were able to take advantage of the historical opportunity and circumstances that existed in Syria and start a women's revolution. They lead the revolution and actively participate in all institutions, departments and organizations in the north and east of Syria. Below we summarize the most important achievements of the women's revolution in the last decade.

Women in the Democratic Autonomous Administration

Women have taken the lead in all areas. Since the establishment of the autonomous admin-



istration in 2014, women have played the most important role in its development and implementation. The self-administration system is based on the idea of a democratic nation based on the thoughts and philosophy of leader Abdullah Öcalan. Therefore, women have played a role in all bodies of the autonomy administration, such as the Executive Council, where for the first time a woman became the chairperson of the Executive Council of the Afrin region. In addition, 4 women were appointed as heads of the main bodies (economic, cultural, financial, women). Advisory councils and special offices for women's issues were established in all institutions and administrations. In April 2016, the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria officially approved the system of co-chairs in all bodies and offices. According to the social contract, which is a regional constitution for self-government, a 50 percent gender quota was accepted, and this principle is applied in practice from the smallest cell, the municipalities, to the highest level of leadership. With the liberation of more regions from the clutches of ISIS by the Syrian Democratic Forces, the Autonomous Administration was extended to the northeastern plain of Syria, which now consists of three autonomous administrations: Cizre - Afrin - Euphrates and four civil administrations in Raqqa, Tabqa, Deir Ezor, Manbij. In the regions liberated from the clutches of ISIS, many women have joined the autonomous administration.

#### The co-chair system

The Autonomous Administration believes that the co-chair system is the best solution to prevent unilateral decisions (mostly by men). In all administrative matters at all levels, men and women participate equally. For the first time in the north and east of Syria, the system of co-chairmen was implemented in 2012 at the fifth congress of the Democratic Union Party, in 2013 the system was adopted in the municipalities and the Democratic Society Movement, and in 2016 in the Autonomous Administration. This principle is applied and is considered a fundamental article of the recently drafted social contract.

#### Women's Law

As part of the women's revolution, the Women's Law was enacted in 2014. Within this framework, women's rights were defended and laws were drafted, such as the prohibition of child marriages, honor killing, polygamy, sexual abuse, family violence. Laws were enacted for equality in wages and inheritance.

#### Women's Political Participation

In the revolution in Rojava, women were able to strengthen democratic politics through women's opinions at the regional, national and international levels. Therefore, they made many agreements with women's organizations in political parties, developed women's awareness in self-government and created a unity with many women's organizations. The strong will of women's organizations was able to gain an independent political identity to overcome obstacles and protect their rights and solve the problems of their society. In addition to the participation of women in political parties and decision-making positions and the elimination of the stereotypical image that women do not participate in politics, which stems from family and tribal contexts, other developments are taking place.

Women's participation in the political sphere is higher than that in international conventions



such as 1325, which calls for women's participation in all levels of decision-making and in the processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, or CEDAW, which fights for the elimination of all forms of discrimination based on gender.

#### Participation of women in the economic field:

In the system of capitalism, especially women and their labor are exploited for profit as if they were a commodity to be bought and sold. The women's revolution here has built concepts of communal economy for women, away from the concepts of exploitation and monopoly. There were created communal projects and opportunities for women to provide for themselves. Women's economic committees are actively involved in organising training workshops and development programs to achieve economic independence.

#### Women's participation in the justice field

A Women's Justice Council has been established in north and east Syria to promote justice for women and protect their rights. It works with all institutions and agencies that play a role in solving justice problems faced by women due to gender discrimination. In building a system of social justice, it relies on the strength of the moral principles on which society is based, such as justice, equality and democracy. Women and mothers play an important role in implementing this method through reconciliation committees and women's houses in every neighborhood and region to solve problems in the family and community and to guide, empower and encourage women to know and demand their rights.

#### Women's participation in defence

Legitimate self-defence is one of the basic principles of the democratic nation's project to protect existence and life. Therefore, especially as women, there is great importance with forming defence against all kinds of patriarchal violence. Based on this concept, many women entered the field and joined the HPC Jin (Women's Civil Defense Force) to protect their neighborhoods and their people.

The Asayisha Jin (Women's Internal Security Forces) were established in 2013. Their main goal is to combat all types of violence against women in society, protect them from abuse, murder and forced marriage, and enforce women's laws, as well as protect the security and peace of villages and cities from open attacks or incidents of drug proliferation, violence and conflict.

The YPJ (Women's Protection Units) were established on April 4, 2013. These units fought in many battles alongside the YPG (People's Defense Units). The women in North and East Syria fought on the front lines to defend their territory against ISIS. While most countries were afraid of how to counter this terrorism, the women destroyed ISIS. And that became a source of inspiration on a global scale. They also took responsibility for liberating women who were kidnapped and enslaved by ISIS. The YPJ was able to spread the idea of women's struggle for freedom throughout the world. This was the reason why women from all over the world joined their ranks.

### Participation of women in the diplomatic field

The resistance and struggle of women in Rojava became known everywhere and became a source of inspiration for all women. In this way, doors were opened for women in North and East Syria that were previously closed in the field of diplomacy. In the field of diplomacy, the presence of women worldwide is still very low today. However, in the Women's Revolution, women played the leading role in representation and became the voice of their people on the international stage. Kurdish women participated in their national duty to strengthen the work for Kurdish national unity by holding the first national congress of Kurdish women in Amed (Diyarbakir). The second congress was held in Erbil and the third congress will be held in Rojava. Women have worked for the common struggle of women's organizations in Syria with all different structures, religions and organizations by building relationships, developing alliances and creating common platforms with people and organizations against capitalism, fascism and oppression. This prompted numerous delegations to visit the region, prepare research circles and studies, write books, document films and learn from the experience of the revolution and take it as an example. Many people have also joined the revolution and some of them have fallen martyred for this revolution. The women have advocated for the establishment of research and information centers and the need for women's diplomatic work to read and spread current events from a women's perspective.

### Role of women in the field of media

With the beginning of the revolution, women played an important role in the press, e.g. in radio, news agencies and TV channels. Hundreds of women became the voice and image of resistance in the media. They have proven themselves in the media field and have done strong work against any kind of discrimination. With her pen and voice, she began to analyse the political reality and fight in the press on three fronts: the prevailing patriarchal mentality in Middle Eastern society, the attacks of the Turkish state, and the attacks of ISIS. It not only followed the news, but was also present on the war fronts and played an important role in reporting transparently and presenting relevant facts. They also put their lives in danger and some of them even sacrificed their lives for it. According to the Union of Free Media in Northern and Eastern Syria, the proportion of women in the media is 70%. In 2020, the Women's Media Union was founded, which includes female media professionals and journalists. On March 8, 2018, the first broadcast of Jin TV, a satellite channel for women, was aired. JINHA was established, a women's news agency at the level of Northern and Eastern Syria to reach women's voice, clarify their identity, struggles, actions, voice and truth.

### Women's Academies

In northern and eastern Syria, there are dozens of women's academies that train women in all fields: politics, human rights, young women, diplomacy, women, jineoloji, traffic, education, security, and have been opened in all districts and regions since the beginning of the revolution in 2011.

## Women's organizations in North and East Syria

Kongra Star was founded in 2005 during the rule of the Syrian regime and worked in secret until the beginning of the revolution. With the beginning of the revolution, the work developed in the committees at the level of villages, cities and districts at the level of Rojava. It has branches in Sulaymaniyah (Kurdistan Region), in Lebanon and in Europe, Damascus.

Syrian Women's Council was established in 2017 to unite the views of Syrian women inside and outside Syria with all ethnic, national, cultural and ideological structures so that women can make decisions and have a real representation of women in drafting the constitution and guaranteeing women's rights. Women's Council of North and East Syria was established in 2019. It is a political, human rights, social and cultural umbrella that includes all women's organizations and women's offices within political parties and civil society organizations dealing with women's issues. Its aim is to protect women's achievements in the North and East of Syria, strengthen and develop women's laws and implement them. The Syriac Women's Union was founded in 2013. Its goal is to organise Syrian, Assyrian and Chaldan women, revive their history and preserve their culture. The young women's movement played an important role at the beginning of the revolution and was able to develop youth activities in all regions during the revolution and open academies to train many young women to play an active role in society, because young people are the dynamic force of democratic change in society. The Free Womens Foundation was founded on September 5, 2014 and is an independent association that advocates for women's issues, empowers them in many areas, and opens up employment opportunities for them. Sara Organization to Combat Violence Against Women was founded in 2013 and fights against all kinds of physical and psychological violence against women. Culture Women's Movement (Hilala Zêrin) was founded in 2016 and worked for the development of culture and art of women in the framework of a revolutionary culture against cultural assimilation. Jineoloji is a new science proposed by Abdullah Ocalan and developed by the Kurdish women's movement. With Jineoloji, all sciences are re-examined from the perspective of women. The aim of this approach is to overcome the social problems and inadequacies created by patriarchy and capitalism. Zenubiya Women's Gathering was established in 2021 in the liberated areas and organises the women of Raqqa, Manbij, Deir Ezor and Tabqa. Yezidi Women's Assembly was established in 2021. It takes care of the problems of Yezidi women and brings Yezidi women who were rescued from ISIS to their families and also works for the revival of Yezidi religion and culture.

Finally, I would like to remember the martyrs who died on the way for these achievements and sacrificed their blood for women's freedom. Women together protect these achievements and try to develop them further and make them a legacy for all women in Syria, the Middle East and the world. The revolution in Rojava is a sign that this new era will be an era of freedom and democracy for all humanity.



## International women join the women's revolution

by Rojda Dandara - artist from Brazil

I would like to start by remembering all the martyrs who gave life to the revolution in Rojava and elsewhere in the world. Without them we would not have made the revolution and, therefore, it is up to us to continue all the revolutionary struggles. Sharing experiences, knowledge and culture is what we do all the time here. We live and coexist sharing, exchanging, fighting, transforming and learning from places, people and cultures. And so, the flame of hope is reignited. We are not enough alone, we need the other to live and to fight. As Öcalan said: "hope is more valuable than victory". A peoples' struggle hopes to lead its own destiny to illuminate even the daily life. For years of our lives we rehearse and act out different possibilities to change reality. I remember when I started theater, I wanted to change the world. I looked for several alternatives, until one day, I realised that first it was necessary to change my history and join a people who are in constant struggle.

The Kurdish people made a revolution of a libertarian nature in the 21st century, led by women. Ten years of Revolution! And we, internationalists, here we are, defending, resisting, fighting, exchanging, working daily, because the art of the Rojava revolution is internationalist and strongly linked to the ancestry of women and the roots of a people that resists and fights bravely against patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, liberalism... If we represented the history of this struggle, on stage there would be many women fighting and being examples of dignity, love, strength and achievements.

When looking at us women, in the light of the revolution, we see the women who generated us and, before them, those who generated our mothers, and before them, the others, and the others and all of us. Looking at us internationalist women under the strength of the Rojava revolution, we know what we want and that we can believe in utopia through daily work that gives birth to different, just and libertarian ways of thinking and living. Our task, wherever we go, is to be one within society and to develop our personalities. For, in order to act, we must learn and know ourselves through existing cultural, political and social relationships and ties. Each one we meet in this world will present us with more diversity and teachings. That's why I chose my name Rojda. And recently, I chose a second name: Dandara who, in the history of Brazil, was a woman of enormous importance in the struggle for the emancipation of the black people. Freed, she died in 1694 taking her own life, as she could not bear the thought of being a slave again.

Militant of this revolution, in contact with Kurdish women and the local culture, I learn daily the importance of not being domesticated by the patriarchy that attacks bodies and sickens women, and the cultural colonialism implanted by imperialism. Observing people rooted in culture encourages us to overcome borders, defend ourselves and fight for the legitimate cultural expressions of our countries of origin, especially when we refer to regions where imperialism and patriarchy act violently, such as Latin America, Africa and Asia. It is not possible to accept



that nowadays women are still treated as the property of men and, therefore, killed for it. In 2021, Brazil recorded a rape every 10 minutes and a femicide every 7 hours. Meanwhile, those responsible for the destruction are increasingly protected by laws that defend their market interests and if they think that we are going to succumb it is because they have not realised that we are the creators, germinators and seeds. Therefore, militants of this Revolution, we have the obligation to fight and create another world to enter the scene, not only on stage but also in life. Our strength comes from the many fighters who have fallen, but who live in us.

The internationalism of the 21st century is not only characterized by the forces unions and policies of the socialist and workers' movement. With new sensitivities, internationalists also appear in social movements, such as feminism and ecology, anti-racist movements, in liberation theology, in the defence of human rights and in solidarity with social movements, such as the MST (Movimento sem terra in Brasil). Their example of struggle and resistance has reached the world, as the struggle of the Kurdish woman and people who cross borders to socialize their experience of autonomy with other native peoples, in particular those of Abya Yala. When the MST emerged in the 1980s, it was born internationalist and pulling from Marxist theories. They learned and shared with the resistance struggles of different peoples such as those of Latin America, especially indigenous peoples. On the way to extinction, in the heart of the forests of Mato Grosso and the Amazon in Brazil, indigenous tribes still resist, with a strong aptitude for survival. For 500 years they have survived invasion, slavery and epidemics. Nobody knows how many tribes there are, there may be 300 or more organised into autonomous nations. The strength of indigenous women fights for the land and, above all, for the future, for the right to have a future for their children, for us. They fight for ancestry, for the right to live within their communities, to speak their own language, to enjoy hunting, the river, their traditional medicines, their cultures, they fight to exist. They fight to reforest minds in order to heal the world. The importance of their struggle is undeniable, like that of peasant women in the MST, but today it is up to us to unveil the trajectory of these women and of all those who fight and resist or fought and resisted in order to understand the dynamics that make up all social and political movements and tell history from a female and non-male point of view, and thus, strengthen our actions in society. We must love our origins, love our bodies and love ourselves.

Brazil was built, or rather, destroyed by the colonizer who used the hands of African and indigenous slaves to build cities, work crops and steal natural products that became high-value goods. The Indian and the Black, for centuries, were massacred and resisted, or rather, continue to resist even losing part of their history, their culture and their language. I'm speaking Portuguese here, which is considered the mother tongue, but shouldn't the real language of the Brazilian people be indigenous? I don't know the indigenous language, I speak the colonizer's language. And I realized this when I found in the Rojava revolution an anti-colonial resistance against the Turkish fascist state.

The history of different peoples is based on resistance. And resistance must persist, thus inspiring other peoples to mobilize and fight for their own cultural identity that will guarantee their existence. Women are the greatest example of resistance in the 21st century against a system that violently oppresses them. Capitalism, with the logic of globalization, the culture of individ-



ualization, of the dominant male, of competition and oppression, treats culture as a sexualized commodity, making the ecological and cultural preservation of a people impossible. Therefore, our biggest challenge is to produce our own existence through female protagonism, cultural appreciation and artistic creation.

Only human beings are capable of creating culture and art. Culture is the result of the human hand, executor of our thoughts, imaginations, creations and desires. It is the reflection of the human being on himself, on his origin, his roots and on the world. It is the creation of a reality not foreseen by nature, but in connection with it. From culture, art can be created, as the artist looks at his reality, at his world and acts to correct and celebrate human acts. Therefore, all of us internationalists are artists when we look at the world, create alternatives, rehearse and fight.

What is built daily by the PKK, in this revolution, is a conscious, free and passionate mass of humanity. According to Abdullah Öcalan, “Our understanding of freedom and free relationships form a richness that cannot be found in any other revolutionary movement”. And from this human development, here will be the stage of great artistic creations inserted in a libertarian culture giving the possibility for the construction of a new humanity led by women.

I have 40 Kurdish dance students who teach me daily to love folk dances and, with their hands clasped, they move their feet and shoulders in the same rhythm proposed by the music, in a contagious happiness. I, little by little, open their hearts and free their bodies for new movements. With all our cultural differences, what unites us in the classroom is love, struggle, creation, respect and hope. Thus, as what unites us in internationalism is love, struggle, creation, respect and hope.

“...We plant resistance, under the beat of ancestral drums, which summon us, once again, to put our feet on the path...” – landless women.

Bijî Internationalist Women! Bijî soresa Rojava! Bijî PKK!  
Long live Abdullah Öcalan.

## The role of YPJ Defence in Revolution

Şehîd Jiyan Tolhildan - YPJ kommander

We welcome this forum and congratulate all women in Syria, the Middle East and around the world. And we congratulate all the martyrs who fought for freedom and democracy, the mothers, partners and children of the martyrs, all the comrades who sacrificed part of their bodies and were wounded for this revolution. A few days ago we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the July 19 revolution. Your efforts of the last ten years, in all their colors, different nationalities, religions and cultures have also graced this hall today. As a commander and member of the YPJ, I bow to all the martyrs of this revolution.

Every society has a history, and this history is full of heroes and pioneers. Especially the Kurdish and the Arab, the Iranian and the Turkish societies, with whom we live together in this region as neighbours. There have always been historical pioneers and they have left their traces in Rojava. The traces of the pioneers such as Besê, Sara, Zarife have developed. These traces have developed through the role of Qarşin, Roksan, Tolhildan Raman, Sosin Bîrhat and Şîlan Cûdî in Rojava. They have sacrificed themselves to strengthen all societies that are struggling today against the system of oppression, the state and the dominant man.

Step by step, the YPJ moved from local villages in Rojava to the entire region of Syria. With their humility and their philosophy of defending their own existence and society, they opposed the brutal ISIS mercenaries who were killing everyone in the name of Islam in order to create a state between Iraq and Damascus. Even now we can observe that the fighters have liberated us from brutality, violence and the accompanying mentalities. We have seen what situation they have created for the society. If we look at all the continents of the world, we see that the nation-state system has really left nothing for women and society.

Besides our self-defence and struggle, there is no other way to create a free individual and a free society. For this reason, we wholeheartedly congratulate all the women who are part of this revolution. And today we as YPJ can say that thousands of women, mothers, with 10 years' worth of work and effort of their own hands, have transformed this earth into a holy one. There were so many sacrifices for this that we could have talked about them for hours to list them all. Every mother, every girl and every family saw themselves as responsible. Those who recognised their power took up arms and took their place on the frontline. With self-confidence and without looking back, they have fought without differentiating - these are Arabs, Syrians, Armenians, Turkmen, all that are born of the Middle East and the women of the world. They have defended an ethical, political society as the only way. This is what we live for, this is what we fight for, and this is what we are ready to fall for, even as martyrs, without ever having a doubt, because the idea and philosophy of the Democratic Nation was founded by Abdullah Öcalan as a gift of freedom. This seed was planted 50 years ago in Kurdistan, in the Middle East and worldwide.



Today, in Rojava, a chance has opened up that we can get rid of the fascism of nation states, that we can end the culture of genocide, the culture of rape, the culture of buying and selling. We say we are women, I exist without anyone putting their hands on my body, without taking advantage of my language, without erasing my gender as a woman. We have seen what ISIS has done in Iraq and Syria. Our coming together today, is an action, a very democratic and natural action. This kind of possibility would not have existed 10 years ago. Women would not even have believed in women at that level, and women would not have been able to work with women so easily to take action. Because the system of nation states, in the name of nationality, in the name of religion, in the name of cultures had created a total fragmentation, not only in our minds and souls, but also physically.

The ideology of self-defence in the YPJ forces is based on their democratic, equal and natural strength, they make no distinction. They began to organise in their own villages and towns but also organised beyond that with Arab women, Syrian women, Assyrian women and Chaldean women. They took up arms and went to the front lines. The reason being, without organised self-defence, society cannot be defended, and above all, we cannot defend women.

If we look at the continents of this world today, for example European society, they certainly had their heroes and pioneers to achieve freedom, but this is an individual freedom. If we look at the societies of the African continent and the situation of women, we see that women are without defence, yes, they are very knowledgeable, and they fight, they don't just accept everything, but they don't have a system that reaches all the women of this continent. Today we also look at the women of the Middle East, their level is not low, so many of them became pioneers, but when their society and their bodies were attacked, they were sold like slaves. ISIS sold and bought so many Kurdish, Arab, Armenian and Assyrian girls and women as prisoners. This is not a story that happened thousands of years ago, but in the last 10 years. This did not happen in secret, but before the eyes of the world public. No one has spoken out about it, except for women, some democratic and feminist movements who have opposed it and taken action. They stood by the women of North and East Syria and consider the YPJ as their own army. Today we see in Afghanistan that especially mothers, women and girls experience so much violence. The pain they suffer is suffered by the whole society. The mentality of self-defence is still too weak. Defence has been left to men for thousands of years. And men, you saw that in Shengal in the form of the KDP and the Iraqi state, who, when ISIS came, before even an Allahu Akbar reached their ears, without looking back, left them behind and ran away.

Five years ago, when Raqqa and eventually Deir-ez-Zor were liberated from ISIS, the women who were liberated said, "We wished for death thousands of times. We wished for death, but it was not in our hands when we were in the hands of the mercenaries." We have seen all this in pictures, videos and films, and now we also see them. But today we face even greater dangers because the ideology of self-defence has not yet arrived as a culture in every home and every society. It has not become the task of every woman. Therefore, plans are simply made and implemented behind closed doors, without asking about humanity, without asking women, although they are the ones who suffer the most from these decisions. Their thoughts and opinions are not represented, but they are the ones who are bought and sold, raped and murdered.



We see today how bad the situation of women is in reality, even in the most democratic states. That is why I want to not only to say this here in my speech, but that our mothers stand up and speak about it.

What selflessness and sacrifice thousands of girls of this country have shown in liberating one city after another. This was done out of the conviction to defend all women. In this country, thousands of young women lie peacefully in the cemeteries of the martyrs because they believed that this revolution would succeed. With this conviction and in this faith, they went to the front. They have fought for the whole world and especially for women everywhere. This forum alone is very sacred, but after that, our first and most important task will be to build the culture of self-defence in all homes.

The revolution of Rojava, of North and East Syria, has attracted attention from all over the world. Internationalist women have joined from all directions of the world, have taken their place in this revolution and have even fallen as martyrs for it. With this, we see that the idea that the revolution carries has been spread. Today, the YPJ forces face even greater challenges and responsibilities because the threats posed by the nation-states have become even more serious.

From the first day of the revolution, we were told the following: In a month the revolution will be over, in a year it will be over, it will not have a long future, they have no faith, they are infidels. Under this slogan, they attacked and announced our last moment. Thousands of women's bodies were sold in markets and given away to each other. But what has been created here in the last 10 years should reach every society, every nation and every religion and show that in fact equality, freedom, and brotherhood has been created with the pioneering role of women. But if their body and society are attacked, women will be the first, before all others, fighting at the highest level with every method, tactic and technique, they will not bow down. Because the slavery imposed on women is broken, women are no longer ready to surrender, in Northern Kurdistan, Southern Kurdistan, Rojava and everywhere in the world.

Women are being captured and murdered, but they do not give up. They defend themselves every way possible. So we are very happy that this forum, where all colors and voices of Syrian society are represented, is taking place today. Women from the Middle East and around the world have also participated. We say to the whole world: we are not attacking anyone, but if the whole world attacks us, we will fight to the last point, to the last breath, to the last drop of our blood. We will not accept anything other than self-defence. No one can destroy this revolution as long as there is still a commander or a fighter. This was the conviction of Sosîn Bîrhat, Tolhildan Raman, Şîlan Goyî and Sozdar Cûdî, who stood until the end and sacrificed themselves in the front ranks for the defence of the free individual and the free society. So that our mothers and daughters can live safely in this revolution.

We are ready to resist all attacks. This is not just words. Today, we as YPJ owe something to the women of Afrin, Serekaniye and Gire Spi. Until we liberate these regions, until we return the refugees, the mothers and girls, we will not be able to sleep peacefully by day or by night. The only



task for us will be to liberate these regions again. So that mothers and all women can live together again in peace with their neighbours. This will be our task and our duty. I greet once again this forum. And greet with respect the martyrs of this revolution. We follow their path.

We as YPJ renew our commitment in front of this forum and all these women. As long as there are attacks on women, we will carry our weapon with us. Step by step, front by front, we will liberate this region, this is what we promise to our friends and enemies. This revolution will surely become a reality for women of the whole world.

## Situation and resistance of women in regions under Turkish occupation

By Aynûr Paşa – Member of the Centre for Research and Protection of Women’s Rights

The revolution in Rojava has become known as the women’s revolution. This is because women played the main and pioneering role in it, occupying an important place at all political, military, administrative, diplomatic and legal levels. Women took their place in various self organised departments, demonstrated their ability and made clear their commitment to defend the revolution and the achievements gained.

The regions of North and East Syria have been characterized by stability and security, especially after the defeat of the Islamic State (ISIS). The presence of women in the war against ISIS spread a state of terror among the ranks of ISIS, because the women proved that they do not fear death and will defend their dignity and their country until the end. The martyr Arin Mirkan is a good example of this.

The regions of North and East Syria received hundreds, if not thousands, of Syrians who fled other regions to escape the war and seek a safe and stable refuge. The war that was waged against the population contained methods that took the region back to the time when women were bought and sold on the slave market. Turkey started its unequal war in the form of violence in the regions of North and East Syria in collaboration with the radical and extremist factions of the Syrian National Army. It had the aim of controlling large parts of the Syrian land and implementing its Ottoman plan in the region. The Turkish state’s plan is to invade 30 km deep into Syrian land and accordingly they started their air attack on Afrin city and occupied it after bombing. The bombing lasted for more than 55 days. The aim of the bombardment was displacement and the state of fear and terror that spread among the population as a result of repeated indiscriminate killing of the entire population, whether civilians or military.

After the occupation of Afrin, the occupying state and groups it supported, such as the Syrian National Army, perpetrated all kinds of attacks against the residents, especially women. Many women were kidnapped to demand ransom from their families.

In our meeting with some female prisoners from the occupiers’ prisons, we also documented that they were subjected to physical and psychological torture, and some of them confirmed that they were raped and sexually abused by several members more than once.

The same forces also kidnap women and children with the aim of selling and trading their organs or employing them in brothels. Human rights organizations in Afrin also confirmed that most families are forced to marry off their underage daughters at a young age to avoid having to marry them off to a member of the militias present in Afrin.

One of the members of the ‘National Army’ who was arrested later confirmed this: “If we saw a beautiful girl in any house, we surrounded the house and took her by force if her family refused



to give her to us, whether the woman was married or not”. Women who are subjected to sexual violence often do not talk about it because of shame and fear.

Then, the areas of Gire Spi and Serêkaniyê became the target of the occupying state, where it followed the same policy of systematic attacks by bombing with airplanes, without distinguishing between civilian and military areas. People there were also forced to leave their homes and migrate to other areas in the north and east of Syria. Many still live in camps, forced to accept difficult living conditions.

The systematic anti-women policies of the occupiers are the same in all areas, where murder, imprisonment, rape and assault have become commonplace. In addition, prostitution is promoted both in the occupied territories and in the camps for the refugees, in order to weaken the will of the women.

The number of people displaced by the Turkish occupation army and its mercenaries was estimated at 600,000 people from Afrin, Serêkaniyê, Gire Spi and their surroundings.

Most of those displaced are Kurdish people, and 60% of them are women and children who lost their lives and were injured in thousands. The International Commission of Inquiry for Syria has documented 70 cases of rape of women and girls in Afrin and 30 cases in Serêkaniyê, in addition to hundreds of women held in prisons of the militias where they are subjected to the worst forms of torture and degrading treatment of human dignity.

Statistics on crimes against women in the occupied territories are hard to confirm, but our Center for Research and Protection of Women’s Rights has documented the following figures: From 2018 to 2022, 118 women were killed, 216 abducted, and 212 injured. Furthermore, 117 children were killed, 64 kidnapped, and 252 injured.

From this we conclude that the occupying Turkish state has committed and is still committing crimes against humanity against women in the occupied territories in order to break the will of women in North and East Syria, who have become role models for all women in the world through their will and determination to achieve victory.

So we have to mobilise the world public opinion against this occupation to end it. Women and children must be able to return to their homes, support and help must be given to the people in all occupied territories, including rebuilding work so that their people can live in safety and peace on their land.



## Ideological attacks against the Women's Revolution: Women's Resistance to defend their existence and achievements

by Zayide Mamo - Member of the Jineolojî Academy of North and East Syria

The achievements gained during 10 years of Rojava revolution have resonated around the world. Every revolution in the world is known by its own colours. The Rojava revolution is recognised as in woman's diversity and this is expressed in the phrase 'the Rojava revolution is a women's revolution'. Within this statement, there is a great struggle and great sacrifices, work and faith of women. In order for this revolution to be a women's revolution, many of us fell martyred many of us were injured, and their great effort given and work done on many different fronts. What keeps revolution alive is this conviction. The world's hegemonic interests and regional powers have been carrying out raids and operations against this revolution for ten years in many ways. Our land is also the site of the 3rd World War.

At the very moment we are holding this conference, our revolution is under threat of war. These threats are many and varied. But here, on behalf of the Academy of Jineolojî of North and East Syria, I will specifically look at the ideological attacks against the people of Rojava and the achievements of the women's revolution.

In the era of capitalist modernity, power is fabricated through sexism, nationalism, and fundamentalism in both religion and science. Moreover, liberalism and individualism are the most effective weapons of assimilation and 'society-cide'. These are also the ideological weapons used against the women's revolution.

Ideological attacks are carried out both by 'soft' methods, such as psychological and political warfare, anti-propaganda, misinformation and corruption; and by hard methods, such as violence and massacres. But the purpose of all these is to break the will, identity and political power of women and society.

Sexism is the oldest ideology and the source of all the ideologies of power and domination. For this reason, the most sophisticated attacks are carried out through sexism. When it comes to sexism, even oppressive forces with different interests and goals agree.

Since 2011, there have been big and rapid changes in the situation of women and society in Rojava. The sociological research on the level of the North and East Syria held by the Academy of Jineolojî has revealed that through the process of revolution most women have recognised their power and rights much more. Women's participation and governance in the social, economic, political and military fields has become a source of self-confidence and a new identity for the women of Rojava. With the establishment of women's institutions and councils, the development of laws to protect women's rights, and the establishment of the co-chair system, significant progress has been made in the field of representation of women's perspective and will. In



addition, educations and activities have been held related to overcoming patriarchal mentalities and sexism. This has led to some positive changes in family and partner relations. However, the patriarchal mentality that considers women as “man’s honor, and property” still imposes itself and sexist attacks on women continue. Where women’s empowerment and struggle are weaker, sexism makes itself felt.

As shown by debates carried out within society and the records of Women’s Houses (Mala Jin), Women’s security forces and structures of Women’s Social Justice, events such as murders and suicides of women and physical, sexual and mental violence against women still occur. Many acts that violate women’s rights and freedoms have been condemned through the “Basic Principles and General Rights of Women” of the Autonomous Administration in 2014. However, some of these acts continue in society. In particular, there are still many people under the effect of patriarchal thinking who maintain practices such as underage marriage or having multiple wives. Under the conditions of war, conflict and migration of the last 11 years in Syria, the tendency of families to marry their girls early continues to occur. Many families excuse this situation as ‘protecting girls’. Marriage is seen as a way of salvation. This also encouraged by the propaganda “the number of men has decreased, it is difficult to find a proper husband”. In addition, the influence of religious concepts and ideas are efficient in these trends. Attempts to marry young women early, enslave women as child bearing tools and domestic servants, or prohibit the movement of women under the mentality that it would be ‘sinful’ and ‘haram’ are encouraged once again to prevent young women from studying, developing and seeking life and freedom. On the other hand, sexist attacks affect the lives of individuals and society through the technologies and culture of capitalist modernity. In this way, women and society are separated from their communal culture and values. Instead of these, the imitation, materialism and individualism of liberalism and capitalist modernity are presented as progress. This is how sexist approaches that consider women as a tool for sex and men’s pleasure are being developed in the society of North and East Syria. Indian and Turkish TV series have negative effects. Under the influence of these approaches, in spite of the poverty, war and trouble in the region, sectors of fashion and ‘plastic surgery’ are spreading and becoming an increasingly profitable sector. In spreading this modernist life style, international NGOs also have an effective role.

Many times these effects of capitalist modernity are used against the achievements of the women’s revolution. The effect of the women’s revolution is undermined with comments like “women have misunderstood freedom”, or “our women are not ready for these rights and freedom”. What is happening under the influence of the capitalist lifestyle and what is a desire to return to the old backwards society should be teased apart.

The pressures on the side of conservative traditions and religious dogmatism, and directing women back into capitalist modernity, are two of the most important trends of ideological attacks. They always work in relation to each other. We have to intensify our struggle against these two. Because the two types of attack aim to destroy the women’s revolution, by suppressing women’s life and will. Against the separation and commodification of women, it is necessary to strengthen our collective spirit and share women’s struggle to protect the revolution and achieve freedom of society. The pain and outcry of every incident of violence against women



can be a call to understand and analyse the causes of this incident and strengthen the struggle.

Every attack and injustice against a woman threatens all of us, our life and freedom. With this approach, we consider education, discussions and activities to strengthen women's will, memory, organisation, cooperation and self-defence as our main duties. Also, in this matter we want to promote the joint attitude and efforts of men and women, young people, the elderly - in short, all sections of society - so that we can prevent physical and mental attacks against women in the 11th year of the revolution. And develop relationships based on love and respect among partners, families, and communities.

In contrast to the ruling ideologies, Abdullah Öcalan has pushed for the ideas of women's freedom and the liberation of society. The philosophy and ideology of Abdullah Öcalan, which is systematized in concepts such as the ideology of women's liberation, democratic socialism, democratic confederalism, democratic nation and hevjiyana azad (free life together), at the same time prepared the foundation of the Rojava revolution and the women's revolution. The roadmap, goals and project of the revolution have been clarified and implemented with the power of this ideology.

In terms of evaluating the 21st century, Abdullah Öcalan calls it the century of the women's revolution and century of the principles of the ideology of women's liberation. Against each of the principles of ideology of women's liberation, there is an ideological attack. The spirit of welat-parezi (love for and defence of the land) has been replaced by the fueling of racism, orientalism and nationalism. Against the principle of free thought and free will of women, the hegemonic forces have re-imposed religious fundamentalism and the culture of celibacy on women. On the other hand, technology and digital media chip away at people's critical thinking, and the truth is being distorted. Instead of organization, individualism is encouraged as freedom. The main answer to the struggle is fatalism and the belief that 'there is no alternative' and 'nothing can change'. In contrast to the principle of ethics and the natural beauty of women [aesthetics], the meaninglessness of life, the orders and patterns of fashion on the shape of the body, a style of wearing clothes, etc. are imposed on women.

Another issue that we want to focus on in this discussion is the ideological attacks and the danger to women from ISIS. The ideology of the fascist and religious-dogmatist organization of ISIS expresses the highest level of ideological, political, economic and social attacks against women and revolution. The hegemonic forces have themselves been involved in the development of the ideology of political Islam and the establishment of religious organizations such as Al Qaeda, ISIS, Al Nusra, etc. In this contemporary period of the capitalist system's crisis and the 3rd World War, these forces intend to undermine the development of liberating ideas, the steps of the women's revolution and the self organization of society. In this sense, we can consider the creation of ISIS as the creation of anti-revolutionary thought and as a tool for femicide.

ISIS has used its religious and sexist ideology to carry out physical, intellectual and cultural genocides on women and people, with swords and slaughter. The purpose of ISIS's thought and actions is to spread fear, destroy and make the resistant and authentic roots of women and soci-



ety surrender. The Yezidi Kurds are attached to their original beliefs and culture. They preserved moral and political life and values for thousands of years. For this reason, Yezidi people were specially chosen as the target of murder and massacres by ISIS. In the 73rd massacre on the Yezidi people, a special genocide against Yezidi women was carried out. By killing, raping, torturing, selling, and enslaving Yezidi women, ISIS aimed to destroy the spirit, identity and existence of the Yezidi community as a whole. At the same time, they [ISIS] believed that by breaking Yezidi women, they would be able to eliminate the life force and resistance of all women. The cruel actions of ISIS, especially personified in the abducted and captured women and children, created deep fear. The methods of cultural genocide, forced displacement and ideological violence were the reasons why many Yezidi women and children in ISIS captivity denied their language, identity, culture and religion until they forgot them. Many of them are still living this pain and fear after being freed from ISIS.

However, one of the most tragic aspects is that ISIS attracted a large number of women with its anti-women ideology. In the mindset and system of ISIS, women are used both as slaves to serve men, to increase the number of soldiers and child servants, and as commodities of trade that are bought and sold. Also, in its propaganda, ISIS identifies individualism, natural and social evils, the destruction of faith and morals as consequences of falling from religion. As a solution they present the seemingly meaningful sociality within the Islamic state and life in heaven after death.

Due to the influence of this propaganda, a number of women also fell into the traps of ISIS. Those who sought a solution to the pressure, crisis and meaninglessness of modern life. They believe that returning to the so-called 'true' religion is the only way to salvation. This ideology explains their scorn, and strict obedience to all God's commands represented through the man and the Islamic State. Therefore, ISIS ideology considers it legitimate to carry out harsh punishments, up to lynching, imprisonment and slaughter against anyone who does not comply with their laws. Based on this ideology, ISIS has trained hundreds of thousands of women, men and children as soldiers and killers through digital media and through its cells in many countries of the world and especially in the occupied territories.

Some of the women have approached ISIS because of the material opportunities that ISIS promises to their members and supporters in the occupied territories. Among those women there are especially people from Asian countries. The women and people of those countries struggle with poverty and hunger because of policies of robbery and exploitation. In addition to the influence of religious propaganda, those women have been searching solutions to their economic problems among robber gangs. However, they failed to realize that ISIS is actually a tool of the capitalist system's power and exploitation.

Women who have recognized the truth of ISIS and regretted it, many times do not want to leave ISIS due to fear and threats of death. This dangerous situation is most evident in places like Al-Hol camp. Between January 2021 and June 2022 alone, 106 cases of murder occurred. Most of these victims are also women. Due to the fear of killing and torture, some Yezidi women who have been kidnapped and enslaved do not come forward to reveal themselves. Further, some



of the Yezidi women who have been oppressed and raped by ISIS gangs and have given birth to children, are still living as captives of ISIS's ideology because of the fear that they will not be accepted in their own society.

We can say that the attacks of ISIS, continue today with the military, financial, political and ideological support of many capitalist powers and states - primarily the Turkish state - pose a threat to the revolution. Erdogan's threats of a new war of occupation against the democratic autonomous regions have the same mindset and purpose. The violence against women in Afrin, Serekaniye, Girêspi (Tal Abyad) and other occupied territories is an example of this reality.

To conclude. The findings and achievements of 10 years of the revolution show us that the development of thought and organization based on the ideology of women's liberation, the spirit of a democratic nation and free life together (hevjiyana azad) is our strongest weapon. What is important is that we clearly define our common standards, ideas and positions for the protection and development of the revolution of women and society in every moment of life. In this sense, we believe that the women of North and East Syria will be able to defeat the ideological, political, social and economic attacks against the women's revolution with a collective spirit, through joint struggle and organization, and will be the leading force of resistance and solution in the coming years.

Therefore we say: with the strength of July 19th, we will fan the fire of women's revolution - defend our existence and build our freedom!

Happy 10th anniversary of the Rojava revolution to all the peoples and women of the world!



## The Impact of the Revolution on the Development of Syriac Women's Struggle

by Ilham Matli - Syriac Women's Union

Today we have representatives of three groups joining the panel. We will start with the Syriac women, who I can describe as a collective identity. This is the first forum of the women's revolution in North and East Syria. With women's solidarity, we will protect and develop the gains of the revolution.

Throughout history, women have played a major and pivotal role in social reconstruction, in ancient as well as in modern times. Women have always had a key role in the realisation of social interaction and relationships. But the authoritarian patriarchal system and unjust laws have kept women away from their leadership position. Due to dictatorial governments and patriarchal authority, women have been crushed under the weight of the interests of class society. Thus, over time women were cut off physically, spiritually and intellectually from all aspects of progress and development.

In the Syrian crisis, it is women who pay the most and are subjected to the most horrific violations. Women were displaced, and offered their children as martyrs for the Syrian homeland. This suffering was the result of what has happened in Syria, which has exacerbated social, cultural, economic and political problems towards society in general, yet women in particular.

These problems add a new tragedy. Together with the outdated traditions, customs and restrictions imposed on women, they lead to dramatic and terrible disasters and violations that affect all peoples of North and East Syria and the Syrian people in general. Women are the first victims of patriarchal policies and tyrannical regimes.

It was therefore necessary for the revolution to empower women's free will, so they are able to solve problems, defend women's issues on their own and develop a new defence mechanism against all the challenges and difficulties they are facing in order to preserve their rights.

We note that the Northeastern region of Syria is a social mosaic with various components, as there are different nationalities, ethnic groups, religions and different sectors. Similar in their customs and traditions, they live together in a healthy, friendly and humane way. So we see that the Syriac woman is not far from the Kurdish woman or the Arab woman and other women in this region.

The Syriac Women's Union has been the cornerstone and social building block for the empowerment of the Syriac-Assyrian-Chaldean woman, for the empowerment of her personality, the raising of her consciousness, and the strengthening of her ability to break the cocoon of the family that surrounds her and to fight for her own development.



Before the revolution, the Syriac woman was the sister, mother, wife and friend who took care of her children's education, was in charge of the house and its economy, worked to support the family financially and raise the standard of living. Together with her sons and daughters and some other women, she enjoyed the highest spiritual leadership qualities. In addition, Syriac women were concerned with their outward appearance to emphasize their historical culture and civilization.

However, after the revolution, the view of the Syriac woman changed completely. Her orientation and concept of the new life changed, she found herself and brought out her true nature. She became involved in all areas, including the cultural, the military and politics. She overcame the outdated inherited customs and traditions, broke fear, worked courageously, participated in public life and represented her Syriac, Assyrian-Chaldean people in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. She took leading and pioneering roles as co-chair, deputy and administrator in decision-making bodies and represented her people in international political forums and conferences in order to defend them. She stood up for her rights and those of the peoples of the region, worked to build a free, just and secure democratic society, and became an example of freedom with the knowledge that the freedom of peoples can only be achieved with the freedom of women. Through her struggle, she achieved many accomplishments in North and East Syria, as she was also involved in drafting the social contract for the Autonomous Administration.

Moreover, despite the social obstacles to women carrying weapons, she has trained in the use of weapons to defend her people and the peoples of the region. The women of Beth Nahrin [Syriac Women's Defence Unit], the Women's Protection Unit YPJ and the Women's Security Forces were a symbol of courage and heroism. They achieved this through their successes on the battlefield against the most notorious terrorist organizations such as ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, or the FSA.

In many campaigns (Al-Raqqa - Deir ez-Zor -Til Temer) they took up arms and stood in the front lines to defend their country, their people and the peoples of the region. The Syriac woman continued her struggle to fulfill her aspirations and to build a free democratic society, and in her struggle she became an example to follow. She proved to the whole world that she can protect her homeland and fight alongside the man and work together with her other companions from the Kurdish, Arab and Chechen ranks, and the security forces. Women's and mixed local security forces played a great role in protecting the security of the region.

In conclusion: it is time to declare our cross-border solidarity with the women of the world, one that believes in the strength and will of women. The twenty-first century will be the century of women's struggle. Women are the greatest voice in society and in the struggle for gender equality.



## The Impact of the Revolution on the Development of Arab Women's Struggle

by Nesrîn El Hesên - member of Zenobiya Women's Gathering

The Middle East has been the cradle of human civilizations since the dawn of history. Its geography is very significant, and it is the place where ancient civilizations and cultures were born. The Middle East is a well-known region on the strategic, economic, political, cultural and religious levels.

The woman is the one who has created herself and her surroundings in this geography, given life splendor through her discoveries and worked to create a lifestyle based on freedom. Women in the Middle East have played an important and pioneering role in society in all aspects: political, social and organisational. They are the main engine and the main pillar of change in the Middle East, where they have made great achievements and laid the foundations for development and progress within society, and of course have a great impact on the women of the whole world as well.

With the passage of time, the identity of women was oppressed and marginalized by the male mentality. Women were the first being to be subjected to slavery in human history. To this day, women continue to be enslaved by all patriarchal systems, who realized that eliminating women and killing them spiritually and morally would guarantee them the preservation of their power. Across the world, women have been subjected to restrictions depriving them of their rights and freedom. In some regions, where this situation has gone through historical phases of discrimination, some of these restrictions were based on religious beliefs, but many are also due to the patriarchal system as well as stemming from extraneous customs and traditions. Our society is based on more than just religious beliefs.

Some Arab regions still deprive women of exercising their most basic human rights. This includes deprivation of the right to education, underage marriage, polygamy, deprivation of inheritance, and refusal to recognize even the constitutional laws that stipulate women's rights. Today, women are still not fully exercising their effective leading role in society, and all this is due to society's rejection of working women and its underestimation of their intellectual and professional capabilities. They are left to satisfy the needs and desires of men.

The suffering of Syrian women is especially visible with the emergence of ISIS, which eliminated all civil, social and cultural manifestations and imposed a package of strict laws and unfair provisions and restrictions against women. They were subjected to all methods and types of systematic torture, physical abuse, sexual assault and selling them in the slave market, and became victims of murder and rape. All these violations, brutal methods and war crimes were to distort the true image of the struggling woman and end her life and history.



Despite all these difficulties faced by Arab women in the Middle East, they have resisted and struggled with all their will, determination and persistence to establish the true identity of women in the face of all authoritarian regimes. Like the Queen of the Desert Zenobia, one of the great female characters who wrote the most beautiful epics of heroism in history. To this day she is an example to follow, in free will, and ambition that knows no limits. She is famous for her wisdom, her mind, and her military and political strategy. She reclaimed a movement under the rising sun of freedom, fraternity and peaceful coexistence.

One of the great women fighters, the martyr Sanaa Muhaidli, the owner of the patriotic spirit, wrote the highest verses of martyrdom with her love for the homeland. Among the pioneers in the field of Arabic literature and poetry is the writer May Ziadeh, who has mastered several languages, showing her level of culture and interest in other cultures. She published articles, research, paintings, newspapers and magazines, and had a major role in defending women's rights as an Arab Feminist. Fatima Al-Fihri built the first university in the Middle East, and that university had a major role in graduating senior scholars. She is a lover of science, especially for women. Among the women who participated in the battles were Khawla bint Al-Azwar and Nusseiba Al-Maziniyah. A large number of women participated in all social, organisational, military, economic and scientific fields. As we see throughout history, Arab women will not give up their role within society despite all the difficulties. They have not given up and are still struggling and struggling for the freedom of all women in society.

After the Arab Spring revolution in 2011, Arab women rose up against the authorities, regulations and laws that restricted them and ruined their dignity. Women have a deep connection with resistance and freedom on the ground, their true image shows in their solidarity and their unity in their ranks and efforts. There is a question I have always been asked about by the media, where did women's strength and courage come from? The answer is the oppression, injustice and slavery that they suffered from, due to the ruling and dominant authoritarian mentality. That is why the movement of women still exists and their participation in all fields is continuously progressing. Women have made leaps and bounds in the freedom revolution and their struggle is full of challenges and victories. They have overcome the stereotypical roles that authoritarian regimes used to marginalize their role in society. They have managed, in a few short years, to organize their efforts, consolidate their democratic system, and form their administration, councils and bodies. This presence in various fields is evidence of a great strength in advancing the freedom struggle forward and building a prosperous future. The thinker Abdullah Öcalan says "The revolution that does not include women in its ranks will not succeed".

We must, not only Arab women, but women of all social groups, preserve the gains of our revolution: the revolution of women that was achieved with the blood of our martyrs who wrote the most beautiful epics of heroism and redemption in order to reach the stage of peace. All women, organizing to enter the political stage, and women's resistance throughout history has achieved many revolutions and driven important historical events. But our current revolution is the one that will change the course of history. The first credit for that goes to those who analysed women and gave them the first place in organising our society.



The reality is that the situation of women in the Middle East today is not an act of fate, but is imposed by authoritarian regimes that exist and are driven by the dominant man. We have to become fully aware of this to change the situation and choose a new way.

Therefore, we as women have to work day and night on the path to achieve this revolution. This is why the women's revolution is for us more important than anything. Therefore, we must focus on the women who are outside the circle of women's organisation of liberation, we must close ranks and unify the efforts of all women and highlight the unity and will of women in the struggle in all its diversity. We must escalate of the line of resistance against capitalist modernity, the occupying patriarchal regime, and everything that hinders women's struggle and freedom. It will be a step on the path to solving all human problems and building a sound, moral, political, and democratic society to revive the revolution in the Middle East.



## The Struggle of Kurdish Woman

by Dr. Ebîr Hesaf - Coordinating Member of the Women's Council of North and East Syria

Throughout history, women have played a leading role in building societies and protecting the identity and uniqueness of those societies. In the earliest stages of human history, the laws of society were determined by women's natural right, which included knowledge as well as compassion, justice and equality. However, after the emergence of capital and social classes and gender segregation, which led to the division of society, women were removed from the social realm of life and hidden behind the veil of patriarchy.

In history, a woman could lead the people and the army, become a queen, and men's armies obeyed her orders. On the other hand, women in history were subjected to slavery and humiliation. Societies are different in many ways and the most interesting aspect is the socio-anthropological differences, the position of women in this or that society. This reveals the reality of that society and its way of life, the level of civilization and its mentality.

Within the nations of the Middle East surrounding the Kurdish people, Kurdish society was particularly interested in the personality of the Kurdish woman and her position in the family, household and society, as well as the attitude of the Kurdish man towards her. This is undoubtedly also related to the geographical, historical and cultural characteristics of this society, which influenced its social structure. This is because the mountainous geography of Kurdistan limited contact with other peoples and helped to protect the characteristics of the natural society. Influences from outside, however, had a negative impact on the status of women. These factors diminished the value of women in society. Nevertheless, they could not completely erase the true identity of women in Kurdish society, women were still dignified and some of their characteristics were protected. Minoriski, an orientalist who has known the life of various eastern peoples, says this: "Among the Islamic peoples, the Kurdish people are the most lenient with women." His words may be true in the simple social and economic situation that the Kurdish woman was largely free on these two levels because Kurdish beliefs and opinions do not prevent the woman from moving around in her locality and do not prevent her from receiving guests even if the man is not at home.

From an economic point of view, women worked in the fields, and in some areas, working in the fields was only associated with her or it was her area of expertise. Kurds have not hindered a woman's work or given her difficult conditions. But despite this freedom, women's activity in society was limited in both economic and social spheres, and their labor income mostly went to men, and their right to make decisions regarding their family was also limited to some extent. This means that women occupy a special place in society, accepting the freedom to dress and work, but not complete freedom because of the patriarchal rule that prevailed in society. When the sociological characteristics of Kurdish society in all four parts of Kurdistan are examined, it becomes clear how similar the social status of women and their position are, which shows the



strong connection between the four parts. Kurdistan is little affected by the political borders imposed on it.

Also, the woman was not far from the political arena, because in the history of the Kurds, the Kurdish woman was often the leader of her tribe or village. Even if this is only a small sign, it confirms that Kurdish society accepts the leadership role of women. Perhaps women's leadership also goes back to the many wars and conflicts that the Kurdish people have fought against the aggressors. History documents dozens of names of Kurdish women; women like Mama Khatun, the last ruler of the Dilmi family, who defended her territory courageously and diplomatically for 30 years. Adila Khatun, the wife of Osman Pasha Caf in the city of Halabja, also has a high intellect and a strong personality, nicknamed "Khan" during the British rule in Iraq in the mid-nineteenth century. The black Fatime from the city of Maresh, is also an example. She represented the Kurds at the Ottoman court in Istanbul with 300 horsemen. Her name and those of many others have gone down in the history books. The collective memory has preserved this heroism and it is still recognised today through the Kurdish saying: "A lion is a lion, whether it is a woman or a man."

If we follow the history of the Kurdish people in the last century, we will see that the Kurdish woman was close to the Kurdish national liberation movement. Because her pain was twofold, one because she was a woman and another because she was a Kurdish woman, and this was an impetus for an early awareness of women for freedom. Since Kurdish women were actively involved in political life and the exercise of power, we can mention some of them here, such as Hebse Khan al-Naqib, who considered herself responsible for protecting the Kurdish cause and supported the Kurdish government in Sulaymaniyah. And together with her female friends, she claimed the right of the Kurds for determining their fate. On the other hand, it should be noted that despite the fact that politics has to some extent taken a family form, many women in Kurdistan have joined Kurdish political parties and participated in national and progressive parties such as communist parties like the Iraqi Communist Party. In 1952, the Women's Union of Kurdistan was founded in secret in southern Kurdistan. After a short time, a large number of women joined, but it was not able to establish itself politically. However, the Kurdish woman was always present at the side of the Kurdish man at dances and concerts. And if a woman did not support her husband in managing the affairs of his home, taking care of the children and protecting the family, he could not participate in the revolutions.

Kurdish women received a lot of support after the 1992 uprising in Southern Kurdistan. This is because the women's issue came to the forefront of the Kurdish government's project and became a priority issue for the government after it freed itself from the provisions of the Baas regime and its policies of oppression and terror against women. As a result of the democratic and political changes in the region, the issue of women's participation in politics and other areas of life gained importance. Kurdish women's participation in the field of politics through their involvement in civil society organisations and in the ranks of political parties and organizations, as well as in the military field, also advanced. Compared to the Iraqi parliament and the parliaments of all Middle Eastern states, the participation of women in the parliament of the Kurdistan Region is higher, at 25%. Since a quota of 30% has been in effect since 2009, Kurdish women



won 34 of 111 seats in 2013. This is also a development for Kurdish women, as women won only 7% of parliamentary seats in the period between 1992 and 2005.

Despite the oppression and violence that the Turkish government has inflicted on the Kurdish people to separate them from their national dreams and politics, the Kurdish woman has not been far from the political arena in Northern Kurdistan. The policy of Turkification, the ban on Kurdish language and culture, and the change of Kurdish names, all these measures were aimed at destroying Kurdish identity, but they all failed because of the will of the Kurdish woman. The woman who protected her children from national sentiments and protected Kurdish identity and engaged in liberation movements and political parties side by side with men during the decades of revolutions and upheavals of the 20th century. The Kurdistan Workers' Party was the most prominent party that began a political and progressive movement of Kurdish girls and boys in the 1970s, and after it declared armed struggle, thousands of Kurdish women joined its ranks. These Kurdish women took up arms and stood up to protect their country, allowing a new phase of women's struggle to begin in which military forces led by women were established, which was a rare and unusual situation in history. The first political women's movement emerged that demanded the freedom of Kurdish women and their rights, and this movement affected all Kurdish women in all four parts of Kurdistan, because even though hundreds of Kurdish women have been killed or tortured or both such as Sekina Cansiz and her friends, and Kurdish politicians like Leyla Guven who are forced to endure Turkish prisons. Today, we see thousands of mothers of peace are standing in front of the Turkish killing machine and dozens of Kurdish women parliamentarians are standing in the Turkish parliament demanding their national rights and women's rights; these women have become a symbol for freedom-seeking and progressive ideas.

In Syria, Kurdish women were not far from the political sphere, and at the beginning of the establishment of Kurdish political parties in the mid-1950s, Kurdish women played an active role in the ranks of these parties. Even before that, it had its place among progressive parties, for example in the Syrian Communist Party, which the Kurds joined with the goal of equal rights. They were also involved in women's organizations such as the Syrian Women's Association, which was founded in the early 1940s. In the mid-20th century, the names of some Kurdish women emerged, such as Rewşen Bedirkhan, who represented Syria at the Cairo Congress in 1947 and revived Kurdish culture by founding the "Council" organisation in 1955 with some women activists. At the Conference for the Elimination of Terrorism and Racism held in Greece in 1975, there was only one Kurdish woman present and representing her people. Kurdish women in Syria did not stay away from political work, sometimes with a shy participation, sometimes actively and sometimes their participation followed the political line of the family and they were weak in terms of deciding about women's work. That is why the Kurdish Women's Union and some other organizations were founded. The establishment of Yekitiya Star in 2005, now known as Kongra Star, is considered a revolution in the field of political, social and administrative organisation of women.

The women's movement aims to create such a woman who knows her rights and can participate in political work and decision-making. Currently, Kongra Star embraces tens of thousands



of members. Kurdish women were severely oppressed by both society and the ruling regimes, but their success and belief in their abilities were the two most important factors that enabled women to take their place, overcome obstacles and prove themselves, as well as establish independent organisations and give hope to other women in the region. Amidst all the conflicts and confusions that arose at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Kurdish women formed the Women's Defense Units, which fought a great battle in the liberation of Kobani and other areas in the north and east of Syria and managed to dispel the myth of Daesh. Likewise, Kurdish mothers were in the Civil Defense Forces, where they fought back against the attacks on their community. In parallel, they achieved many achievements at the political, administrative and legal levels. Thus, the Women's Law, the system of co-determination, the 50 percent quota and the founding of women's shelters and organisations were achieved, and women participated in political and administrative decisions and were fundamental to a democratic society.

Despite all the successes and achievements, we are still at the beginning of the road. Although the origins are different, the struggle of women is the same; because freedom, rights and dignity are complementary, unified and comprehensive concepts, and as long as a woman is oppressed on earth, the struggle will continue.



## What is the impact of the revolution on women's struggles?

By Salwa Giga - Tunisian representative of the African women's network FemWise

Revolutionary greetings to all participants in this first forum on the women's revolution in North and East Syria, where I will discuss the impact of the revolution on the course of women's struggles. I always prefer to talk about "women" not "woman", in harmony with the principle of the right to difference, diversity and plurality. In order to avoid the very stereotyping that we seek to overcome. To put the issue in its methodological framework, we have to define the concept of revolution. We are not talking about the "revolution" in general, but rather about the "women's revolution". To be sure, in Tunisia, for example, what was considered a revolution within the so-called "Arab Spring" was not what it looked like. It is better described by the term "dark decade" suffered by the society. The 2011 uprising was not supported by a revolutionary vision and has not resulted in a real democratic system that contributes to achieving the goals that were set. The slogan of the demonstrators was "Work/ Freedom / National Dignity". The real revolution is the women's revolution within the framework of this uprising. I will try to show the effect of the uprising on the course of women's struggles in Tunisia and the region.

Perhaps the best example for this vision is a statement by the Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, whose voice rises from behind the prison walls. He shows the distinction between past and present struggles. The nineteenth century was the century of the bourgeois parties, and the twentieth century was the century of the labor parties. The twenty-first century will be a century for parties and organisations centered around women and striving for the freedom of women. The freedom of women is connected with cultural issues and ecology. Further, the issue of women's freedom is connected with the issue of children's rights, health issues and educational issues. In the view of Abdullah Öcalan, the issue of women is more important than the reality of the class and the nation, and broader than them.

It should be recognised that women are excluded from the whole of society and are at the bottom. Freedom of a society starts with women's freedom. We are going through a historical phase with changes in many fields of life, from society to politics, from economy to environment. What will determine if change will be made is the level of organisation and struggle with women's leadership. With the leadership of women freedom, democracy, effective equality and a healthy environment can be won.

The "New World Order", in its close connection with the patriarchal system, is showing its real face. This "New World Order" has the intention of extending its influence and dominating the world, starting with Afghanistan, then Iraq and North Africa, as well as the Middle East- in particular the regions of Kurdistan, Syria and Iraq. To establish dominance, wars and the rise of right-wing regimes will both be used. We observe an escalation of exploitation and systematic attacks on the achievements won by hard struggle. Now, millions of people have become refugees and are uprooted from their homes. Many people live in areas where there is armed con-



flict or war. We have the Russian-Ukrainian conflict as the best example of the systemic attacks of hegemonic powers.

What we can observe as a result of these circumstances is an increase in the rate of violence against women including sexual violence and femicide. But we can also observe that women now raise their voices loudly. This makes them an essential revolutionary force and a major threat to the existence of the authoritarian regimes. We can state that the women's struggle is the most comprehensive struggle that is concerned with true democracy and human dignity.

Women's struggle does not build borders, but transcends them. The women's struggle is able to play a pioneering role and historical role within movements. Women in Rojava took up arms in self-defence, in defence of land and in defence of freedom. Women in Rojava fought against ISIS without fear of death to defend their freedom and dignity. These are attitudes that instilled a feeling of strength in the women of the entire Middle East and North Africa. They impacted women's self image, showing how women can defend themselves. Women also saved many Yezidian women from the hands of ISIS. This showed that when women are organised there can be an answer to the abhorrent slavery and trading of women's bodies as sexual goods which was the fate of many Yezidian and Armenian women.

With what is called "revolution" in our country, the opposite is the case. Instead of freedom, we can observe the jihad and Tunisian women sent to Syria to marry jihadists, which is nothing more than satisfying the sexual desires of fighters in the ranks of ISIS. This is the political Islam that the Western capitalist powers support through the encouragement of resurrecting religious associations and building mosques in light of the spread of illiteracy and the shortage of educational institutions, which has helped them to reach power.

Can the imperialist capitalist forces extend their influence over our countries without guaranteed control? The creation of an internal power to dominate women was a central aspect of the strategic plan adopted by these forces, by supporting political Islam. This confirms the nature of the phase identified by Öcalan, focusing on women's role. There is no doubt that women's movements are influenced by each other, but there is a special push in each country. Efforts have been made to coordinate and create a women's force. Alliances emerged at the national, regional and even global levels.

I remember the meeting that took place in Kurdistan, Turkey, Diyarbakir in 2013. It was the basis for the establishment of the independent women's international movement. The World Women's Conference was a response to the exclusions practiced by the United Nations against Kurdish women in the International Women's Meeting that was held in Australia. This independent global movement began to impose its presence through the conference that was held in Nepal in 2016, and which will be held in Tunisia next month (3rd-10th September, 2022). This is a clear measure of women's solidarity at the global level. It can be seen as a continuation of the vision that we outlined at the Diyarbakir meeting, when we declared that the 21st century should be the century of achieving effective equality between male and female citizens in all the various countries of the world.



Within the framework of this comprehensive vision, I cannot fail to mention the resistance in the face of what female fighters experienced in Libya after the revolution, and our support for them. It is a great loss that human rights lawyer Hanan al-Barasi was assassinated after she and her daughter were exposed to death threats. She was known for her defence of human rights, and for revealing files related to corruption and financial fraud, as well as her documentation of sexual violence against women in Benghazi and the involvement of armed groups. The assassination of Hanan Al-Barasi comes after the disappearance of MP Siham Sergewa, who was kidnapped by an armed group in Benghazi. She has not been found since. She was kidnapped after the murder of a prominent human rights lawyer and defender of women's rights, Salwa Bugaighis, by unknown persons, on June 25th, 2014. The kidnappings and killings are part of the violence, revenge and intimidation practices by paid armed groups in order to subjugate half of society and empower the dominant powers. They use these strategies to bring the country to its knees so that the dominant powers can control its wealth. Women's struggle in these wars is often ignored, but it is worth raising the importance of women's struggle in Libya and in all the countries of the region. It is important to point out the value of these struggles in seizing gains for women that enabled them to make achievements. Women have assumed many political responsibilities in many countries in the region, including Libya and Tunisia.

Tunisia, before 2011, was known for the rights granted by the Personal Status Law for Tunisian women, such as the prohibition of polygamy since 1956 and mandatory education for everyone, male and female, up to the age of 16. The schooling rate in 2010 exceeded 99%. The collapse began in 2011 with the early drop out of education, which reached 120 thousand interruptions annually. Shall we mention the failed attempts to direct the 2014 constitution towards curtailing women's rights? In Tunisia, there have been political assassinations that killed the martyr Chokri Belaid and the martyr Muhammad al-Brahmi and others, but the conflict was not armed as it happened in Syria. The conflict was ideological between the reactionary Islamist thought and the modernist thought that adheres to individual and collective rights.

The establishment of alliances within the framework of the feminist and progressive movement was a key element in the the struggles undertaken by society, women and men to establish a civil society and to establish laws on the basis of equality. I will give some examples. On the anniversary of the issuance of the Personal Status Journal, on August 13th 2011, we organised huge rallies to demand our rights. On August 13th 2011 we were 5 thousand in celebration of the anniversary. However, it was a celebration to warn for the dangers of the arrival of political Islam. On August 13, 2012 we were 50 thousand in the street when we received news about the attempts of MPs to limit the rights of women. The council proposed a chapter in the constitution stipulating "the complementary relationship between women and men within the framework of the family." While we were demanding equality.

In August 2013, we were 500 thousand in the street, women and men, demanding the inclusion of a principle "Equality between female and male citizens". This meeting happened at the same time that we demanded the inclusion of all human rights and we presented proposals to the Constituent Assembly. We have thus represented a force of suggestion and a force of pressure for the constitution of our rights. This march was the basis for the implementation of these



rights in the 2014 constitution. Undoubtedly, infringement of these rights will continue. In the future, the forces will mobilize again, in order to achieve complete equality between women and men, i.e between males and females.

This struggle also helped us in issuing the Basic Law to Combat Violence against Women. This is a Law of 2017. The forces of civil society have mobilized for them to see the light, even if there still remains a gap between legal texts and reality. Also tens of thousands of people went to the street to demand the approval of the project for the protection of individual rights and freedoms, which provide for “equality of inheritance” between women and men. Although the project was proposed by the late President Beji Caid Essebsi, the battle is still ongoing, and work to change mentalities and educate on a culture of citizenship and equality remains. This is key for the next stage. What is important is concerted efforts, joint work, exchange of expertise and experience, and development. We have achieved successes and identified strategies and qualitative goals, in the short, medium and long term. This is one of the essential fundamentals to make the 21st century the century of achieving equality and respect for freedom in the context of difference, eliminating discrimination and racism. Just as the previous century was the century of the abolition of slavery, so let the 21st century will be the century of equality for all human beings, as well as the century of the abolition of hegemony and the establishment of equal opportunities among all countries of the world. Here we are, once again at the heart of Abdullah Öcalan’s outlook.

## JIYAN TOLHILDAN, ROJ XABÛR AND BARÎN BOTAN



Jiyan Tolhildan was born in 1982 in an Afrîn village. Like all of her community, she was quickly made aware of anti-Kurdish discrimination. Jiyan was involved in women and the Kurdish resistance movement from a young age. She was the commander of YAT and had a unique work of organizing the people for the revolution from the initial steps of the Rojava revolution to the establishment and formation of the YPJ and the command of YAT in all areas of the revolution.



Roj Xabûr was born in 1992 in Darbesiye. She was inspired by the Rojava revolution from its beginning and took an active part in it. Roj was the commander of YPJ and lead the liberation campaigns against ISIS.



Barîn Botan was born in 2003 in the Ehrez region of Shehba Canton. She was the third child in a family of five. Barîn grew up in a family that was connected to their homeland. In her young year, she joined the women's revolution in Rojava. She was a member of YAT - Counter-Terrorism Units. According to her friend, Barîn wanted to save all women from oppression and she has always emphasized that women should not accept the cruel and authoritarian life made by men.



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July 2023