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PKK can seize this opportunity before President Erdogan grab it

Zaher Baher

May 7, 2019

The big news in the Kurdish media including the social media, has been about Abdullah Ocalan being visited by his lawyers at Emrali prison. The last time such a visit took place was on July the 27th, 2011. This is good news at least for many of Ocalan's supporters who have been on hunger strike trying to end his isolation. Some of these supporters have been on strike for 145 days and are in very difficult position.

This news neither needs celebration nor is hopeful. President Erdogan is a cunning politician. He often changes his policies in order to protect himself and his Justice and Development party [AKP]. No doubt his current decision to agree for Ocalan to see his lawyers is in his own interest and the interest of his government especially now he cancelled 31st local election of Istanbul and announced a new one in June. In every occasion he knows whether to resort to peace or war. For instance, in 2015 he decided to end the ongoing ceasefire and resumed a new war that destroyed many towns and villages, displacing

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over 200,000 people and killing and arresting many people, including both the co-chairs of the Peoples' Democratic Party, [HDP] with 10 more MPs. Erdogan also tried hard to prevent US and European states to lift PKK's name from the list of terrorist organizations. He also dismantled the Liberated Municipalities in Kurdistan and arrested over 150 counselors. During the last 4 years, Erdogan has done more damage to the Kurdish people than the successive Turkish government did in the previous 20 years.

At present his government is more isolated than ever. Turkish economy is on the brink of collapse and in the latest local election his party lost Ankara and Istanbul and 8 other cities.

It is possible that Erdogan may declare a ceasefire and start negotiating with the PKK. But history shows there is very little possibility for the AKP to resolve the Kurdish question. This is not just a matter of who is in power. It is in fact a fundamental problem that modern Turkey inherited at its establishment in 1921.

What does the PKK need to do?

It is time for PKK to realize that continuing with its armed struggle is taking it nowhere. There is ample evidence that such a struggle is benefiting the government elite, the military generals and the state of Turkey and not the Kurdish people. The PKK should announce an immediate ceasefire regardless whether the AKP responds.

PKK should not give any more excuse to the Turkish state to destroy Kurdistan further, killing and arresting more people and deceiving the "international community" that the PKK is a terrorist group. It is necessary that it transforms itself from being mainly an armed force into a mass movement, looking after the working class and the exploited masses.

It is time for the PKK to work with other progressive groups, upholding a joint program supported by the majority of the poor and needy, asking for democratic confederalism, gender equality and social ecology as claiming it for a long time. The

PKK has been in a big crisis and this is a good opportunity to rescue itself.