

Kurdish Regional Statement **(Turkey and Iraq)**

Key Messages

- Kurdish communities are mobilizing and militarizing to fight against extremist groups
- the Turkish state's reaction has been militarized in response to Kurdish demands for rights and support for the peace process

Key Recommendations

- support the Kurdish military in its fights against extremists
- support and accelerate the peace process in Turkey, including convening an international monitoring committee
- push Turkey to guarantee equal rights for all women and minorities, including Kurds

Kurdish women in Iraq

The Kurdish region is experiencing militarism as a positive action because the purpose is to protect the area from ISIS, Jabhat Al-Nusra, and other foreign military groups. Extremism in Kurdistan is quite limited, but the current absence of a political solution for autonomy will motivate and provoke extremism. How to fight against militarism and extremism? Concerning the Kurdish area, women's groups are not fighting against militarism because our communities have mobilized to protect our region from extremist groups such as ISIS, but we try to limit the role of militarism and militias. Our initiatives include:

- Raising women's awareness concerning their rights in fighting extremism.
- Activating civil society work by organizing workshops for human rights and youth economic empowerment to provide alternatives for young people who may be lured by extremist groups.

What do we need from the international communities?

- Support the moderate Kurdish military because they are the only military group fighting ISIS.
- Respect the political, social and cultural rights of Kurdish citizens.
- Support and accelerate the peace process in Turkey.

And from the ICAN 2014 Forum, as Kurdish women, we say we are strong human beings, we have educated fighters, but women in our community have faced rape, sexual discrimination, and even are being sold in slave markets. We have suffered greatly and are not receiving adequate support from the international community. We call on you to stand with us.

Kurdish women in Turkey

For Kurdish women in Turkey, we face dual discrimination as women and as minorities. For us, the militarism of the state in response to demands for our basic rights has meant experiencing violence, imprisonment, rape, torture, harassment, forced displacement, and disappearances. And even as the Turkish state began peace negotiations with the Kurdish movement last year, the state is reinforcing

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militarism by building more military installations and police stations in the southeastern Kurdish region. Ankara's regional foreign policy, combined with what we see as a lack of commitment to the peace process internally, means that this peace process is now on life support.

Just as there has been a war against the Kurds for decades, at the same time, there is a war on women in this country. Thus we as Kurdish women are active in trying to educate and raise awareness about the impact of the war. For example, the Saturday Mothers have demonstrated for 500 weeks to demand justice for missing and disappeared relatives; and the Women for Peace Initiative advocates for a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Syria as well as in Southeast Turkey. And in response to the epidemic of violence against women that is growing in this country, we continue to advocate for the rights of women to be free from all forms of violence.

We believe that for a peace process to succeed within Turkey, the state must stop supporting military solutions outside of its borders, and must build a just and lasting peace on two pillars. These are (1) guaranteeing equal rights for all women, and (2) guaranteeing the economic, social, and cultural rights of the Kurds and all of Turkey's minorities.

We call on the international community to support us by pushing this government to implement a national action plan for the inclusion of women in the peace process, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325 which recognizes the unique and disproportionate impact of war on women. We also call on you to join our efforts by setting up an observation committee to monitor the peace process and the progress being made. We also ask for support for women in civil society to help us educate the general population on the negative effects of the war and the need to include women to ensure an effective and just peace process.

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