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Kurdistan

“This revolution we are leading is a women's revolution”

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Kurdistan is a country that is not shown on any map, but which nevertheless concerns tens of millions of people living between Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Erdogan's Turkish state is waging a merciless war against the Kurdish people. Olivier Besancenot spoke to Berivan Firat, external relations spokesperson for the CDK-F (Kurdish Democratic Council in France) about the Kurdish people's struggle here and there.

Can you tell us about the CDK-F, its scope and its activities?

The CDK-F brings together 27 associations in France and carries out activities here on a social and political level to help the Kurdish community integrate, but also and above all to publicize the Kurdish question and violations of the law in the four corners of Kurdistan but also in Europe, particularly in France. It's not easy every day to be part of the CDK-F, but as in all the Kurdish people's struggles, at every level, we resist.

Paris seems destined to be the capital of political assassinations: Ben Barka in 1965, Palestinian activists from the PLO or the FLP in the 1970s, ANC activist Dulcie September in 1988, and then the three Kurdish comrades shot in the head on 9 January 2013. Where does justice stand with this triple murder?

Unfortunately, little progress has been made. Sakine Cansiz was a co-founder of the PKK, an activist and one of the most important figures in the Kurdish movement, who was behind the Women's Army project, the self-defence army. She was one of Öcalan's strong comrades. At the time of her death, Öcalan said, "To kill Sakine is to kill myself, to kill the Kurdish people". She was an extremely important symbol. She was killed in broad daylight, 50 metres from the Gare du Nord, by a man who turned out to be an agent of the Turkish secret service, MIT. Later, the memos ordering the assassination came out, as well as audio recordings shared on Youtube.

At the time, there was a conflict between Gülen and Erdogan, which allowed these documents to be disseminated. Although the murderer is known (he died in prison in 2016), as are the instigators, justice remains at ground zero, as the case is classified as a "defence secret". The notes and information in the hands of the French secret services are not passed on to the court, and the court cannot do its work. For once, France had every opportunity to bring justice to this triple political assassination, but State interests have once again won the day. Justice is independent, but for it to do its job, politics must stop restricting it. A new investigation has been underway since 2019 against those who ordered the killing, but it has stalled because France refuses to lift its defence secrecy.

This triple murder is eminently political: three generations of activists have been killed...

Three generations, yes, but above all Kurdish women. This revolution that we are leading, that the whole world is applauding in Rojava, in the north and east of Syria - with these women who have fought against the vermin of darkness - we are used to saying that it is a women's revolution. By targeting three generations of women, it is first and foremost women leaders, commanders, like Sakine Cansiz, it is also diplomacy in the person of Fidan Dogan, and it is Kurdish youth and the future of Kurdistan through Leyla Söylemez who are being targeted.

This triple murder was no accident. These are not collateral victims. Men from the Turkish secret services had gone to northern Iraq to try to carry out targeted attacks against PKK leaders, and they were caught and held for two and a half years until Turkey silenced them by bombing them.

Nevertheless, they gave the names of the signatories of the mission orders for the assassination of the three activists, specifying that these orders could not be given without Erdogan's agreement. This was a political assassination committed by a foreign state in France, a country that claims to be sovereign!

The field of war seemed to extend to the whole of Europe. In Belgium in 2017, an attack on the Kurdistan National Congress was foiled. The Belgian justice system discovered sleeper cells, a kind of death squad, linked to the Turkish state apparatus. In 2020, in Austria, members of parliament were targeted... All this shows the duplicity of European states in the face of a planned policy.

In Austria, they wanted to assassinate a member of parliament of Kurdish origin. They wanted to silence her because she was denouncing the expansionist policy of the Turkish state, the occupation of northern Syria, the violation of the rights of Kurds and other minorities, democrats, socialists and communists in Turkey, and so on. In Belgium, at the time of the attack, the name of one of the individuals arrested by the police was mentioned in the murder of Sakine, Fidan and Leyla. These individuals had links with the Turkish ambassador to France, who was due to be heard by members of parliament but was recalled to Ankara because he was the second in command of the Turkish secret service.

Turkey is extremely dangerous not only for the Kurds but also for the Armenians. Erdogan wants to redraw the lost territories of the Ottoman Empire. True, a republic was founded in 1923 at the expense of the Kurdish, Syrian and Armenian peoples, but there is no republican mentality.

Unfulfilled promises, such as that made by the Western powers in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which was supposed to grant the Kurds an autonomous region, a promise that was defeated in Lausanne in 1923 by Kemal, who wanted to de-Kurdify Kurdistan. Revolts broke out in the face of discrimination for several decades. At the end of the 1970s, there was a rebound with the birth of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This party, listed as a terrorist organization by the European Union, provided the fighters in Kobane against the Islamic State, who were hailed by Europeans.

The PKK lost 450 cadres in the fighting in Kobane, its most important cadres trained over ten, twenty, thirty years. They were not only capable of fighting, but also of debating, analysing and looking at the economy, ecology and women's issues. Daesh and al-Nosra were declared enemy number 1 by the West. The Kurds fought the world's number 1 enemy on their own doorstep, but for everyone. Yet once they returned to Europe, these fighters became terrorists once again. Like Emine Kara, murdered on 23 December 2022, who had sought asylum in France [...].

Erdogan continues his policy. But Woman, Life, Freedom, the slogan launched after the death of Jina Mahsa Amini in Tehran in 2022, comes from the struggle of Kurdish women...

In the popular training academies, cassettes were recorded. Around 1991, you can see Öcalan talking to Sakine Cansiz and telling her that if women are not free, they cannot live and therefore cannot make the revolution. In 2003, Kurdish women close to the PKK came up with this slogan: if women are not free, society is not free. Women mean life, victory and freedom. Since 2013, we have been using it in all our actions. We find it very difficult to get men to say it. This slogan is inscribed on the tomb of Mahsa Amini (or Jîna Emînî). It's more than a slogan for us, it's a philosophy. You can't talk about the freedom of a society without the freedom of women. It's the freedom of the woman first, then the freedom of society. That's why women are the meaning of life, women are the meaning of resistance. Women are the culmination of victory. [...]

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Translated by *International Viewpoint* from

{ Watch the full interview in French ["Women are the meaning of resistance": the struggle of the Kurdish people - Interview with Berivan Firat-><https://lanticapitaliste.org/videos/la-femme-est-le-sens-de-la-resistance-la-lutte-du-peuple-kurde-entretien-avec-berivan-firat>" class="spip_out" rel="external">**I'Anticapitaliste**.

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