

JOIN “FRIENDS OF KONGRA-GEL”

Appeal

We have noted, with concern, that “Britain has banned Kongra-Gel (People’s Congress of Kurdistan) as an organisation that ‘glorifies terrorism’. The move was announced on 17 July [2006] by Home Secretary John Reid under the new law outlawing the ‘glorification of terrorism’. It marks a further escalation of attempts to criminalise and silence the Kurds ... Thus, whether living inside or outside Turkey, Kurds are now facing ‘anti-terror’ laws used to deter, suppress and criminalise political activities ... The ban ignores Kongra-Gel’s aims and activities since it was founded on 15 November 2003. Kongra-Gel’s main objective is the attainment of ‘peace, democracy, freedom, equality and justice for a solution to the Kurdish Question’ and the promotion of a ‘democratic and ecological society’ through peaceful and political struggle”.

This action by the government frustrates the ceasefire and peace initiative that is being promoted and supported by Kongra-Gel. It prevents people, MP’s, peace organisations and non-government organisations (NGO’s) from learning more about the nature of this significant initiative, or from entering into a dialogue with Kongra-Gel that may fruitfully work towards the attainment of peaceful resolutions to the situation in Turkey and northern Iraq. It even seemingly stops Kongra-Gel representatives from being able to enter the country – even after they have been invited to do so by prominent MP’s seeking to hear about and discuss the nature of this substantive peace initiative.

If the major initiatives of Kongra-Gel - that are aimed at bringing peace to Turkey (via dialogue and negotiation between relevant Kurdish and Turkish parties, and via dialogue with representatives of the wider ‘international community’) - are not even allowed to be publicly heard, explored, considered or debated in the UK without being criminalised, we need to be concerned about what is being done in our name. We should be concerned not only about the potential repercussions of this strategy for millions of Kurdish and Turkish people in Turkey, but about the manner in which our civil liberties are being unacceptably restricted in the UK. We also need to appreciate that the ‘alternative’ initiatives that are being currently promoted by the British-US-Turkish ‘deep states’, hawkish military and US ‘neo-con’ circles and arms traders are highly disturbing in nature. These initiatives appear to support yet another round of intensified counter-insurgency warfare, yet another round of seeking a ‘military solution’ which refuses to engage in any dialogue with relevant Kurdish parties. Kurdish people are expected to ‘acquiesce’ in their suffering (described as being currently ‘genocidal’ in its scope by academics such as Skutnabb-Kangas and Fernandes). As Patrick Hennessy recently revealed: “A top secret memo seen by The Sunday Telegraph, reveals Tony Blair and his senior officials have drawn up an extraordinary ‘wish-list’ of *how they would like to see the world looking ten years from now* ... A contentious section deals with the Kurdish populations of Turkey, Iran and Iraq, all of whom face repression. To avoid being seed beds for terrorism, these populations *must be ‘acquiescing in their treatment’*”.

Many human rights, trade unionist and peace campaigners in Turkey fear that these morally bankrupt aims and wishes of the US-British-Turkish ‘deep states’ – that refuse to respond to ceasefire and peace initiatives meaningfully, or to the plight of Kurdish people in Turkey - will only lead to further destabilisation, hardship, ‘disappearances’ of people, bloodshed, and increased application of draconian laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Law and Article 301 that will affect *all* citizens in Turkey.

On 25th December 2006, for example, “322 intellectuals, activists, artists, academics and politicians released a petition ... demanding immediate *peace* in Turkey’s Kurdish conflict. Saying that violence *wouldn’t* solve problems, the petitioners called on *all* parties to end militarist policies and push forward with civic proposals ... Seeing the ceasefire declared by Kurdish guerrillas *as an opportunity*, the text include[d] urgent demands” that “state institutions” take “a step ... which will place human life instead of conflict and death, in the center of politics. The responsibility of resolution is on politicians in power” (Bianet, 25 December 2006, ‘Petition for Peace on Kurdish Conflict’).

To Remzi Kartal of the Kongra Gel Executive-Council: “Politics and in particular the politics of banning and criminalizing our struggle, led by the UK and other EU member states, have played a critical role in the *continuation* of the military conflict in Turkey *and in preventing the democratic political solution of the Kurdish question*. European governments have given political, diplomatic, psychological and moral support to the traditional ‘deny and destroy’ politics in Turkey in relation to the Kurdish issue. It is clear that these politics are exacerbating the conflict *at a time when an increasing number of people are supporting peace and democracy. A democratic political and negotiated solution based on dialogue is the only way forward to make progress* ... Kongra-gel declared a unilateral ceasefire on 1 October with the aim to create a political environment and a basis for dialogue and peace which received positive reactions both at home and abroad ... [Yet], despite all our calls for peace, ... it is clear that the Kurdish people were again sacrificed to foreign policy interests”.

By criminalising Kongra-Gel, the British government is supporting a US-Turkish state backed psychological warfare policy that seeks to frustrate any meaningful initiative that is concerned with attempting to provide equal rights and the ‘right to life’ to Kurds, as well as a peaceful resolution to the ‘Kurdish Question’ through negotiation with a party whose

main stated objective, as already noted, “is the attainment of ‘peace, democracy, freedom, equality and justice for a solution to the Kurdish Question’ and the promotion of a ‘democratic and ecological society’ *through peaceful and political struggle*”.

As a Kongra Gel Interim Session Assembly Meeting concluded on 29th September 2006: “In a period where the call and voice for peace was never as concrete and urgent, a very high responsibility rests on the shoulders of democratic institutions, associations and individuals, intellectuals and artists. We should not give an opportunity to war profiteers who seek to close all paths to a solution and hold the people of Turkey captive by putting forward a position of 'submission or annihilation' ... We can certainly overcome together this handful of profiteering gangs inside the system who have buried their heads in the sand and refuse to open the path for the voluntary free unity amongst our people ... For this reason our decision for a ceasefire” and a peace initiative “is of historical importance and all intellectuals, artists and all aware democratic circles must support this process”.

In the light of the facts we call on the British government

1] to immediately review its unjustified banning of Kongra-Gel and remove Kongra-Gel from the list of "proscribed terrorist groups".

2] to allow Kongra-Gel representatives to freely enter the UK to publically debate its peace strategy and positions, and engage in dialogue with MP's, concerned NGO's, public interest bodies, peace groups and members of the public.

3] to recognise the peaceful and constructive intent of Kongra-Gel in helping to reach a just solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey and do its utmost to help broker negotiation between the parties concerned.

In signing this statement we/I wish to demonstrate our/my support for and solidarity with the peace and ceasefire initiatives of Kongra-Gel and support for the above demands. We ask the UK government to seriously consider - rather than automatically dismiss - Kongra-Gel's peace initiatives, and we urge it to reconsider its position of favouring US-Turkish state initiatives that are aimed at prolonging a 'military solution' to the 'Kurdish Question'. The 'military solution' will only intentionally result in much more killing of innocent Kurdish civilians, much more needless bloodshed, 'mental harm' and destruction of the fabric of Kurdish society. The process of democratisation in Turkey will also become more difficult as society will be increasingly militarised and subjected to unaccountable 'deep state' and 'anti-terrorist' actions that will target *all* sections of the population, as many human rights commentators fear. The consequence of this UK backed policy will be the further destabilisation of the Near and Middle East. To this, we say: 'Not in our name'.

In light of the above, we/I agree to join "Friends of Kongra-Gel"

Name

Organisation

Address

E-mail

Tel and fax

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