Peace in Kurdistan Campaign and CAMPACC

Statement

**Save Roj TV – independent voice of the Kurds**

The Danish District Supreme Court took a shock decision on 3rd July to shut down and impose a hefty fine on Kurdish Roj TV and its parent company Mesopotamia Broadcasting accusing them of being guilty of inciting terrorism. The outcome of this appeal case sentenced the broadcasters to pay a fine of 5.2 million Danish kroner each and decided to revoke their broadcasting licenses. Along with Roj TV, Mesopotamia Broadcasting's MMV and Nuce TV also had their licenses revoked.

The decision has been condemned by many leading Kurdish organisations who regard the move as ‘’politically motivated’’ and evidence of close cooperation between the authorities in Denmark and Turkey, which has long pressured to have the Kurdish news channels closed down.

There is plenty of evidence to support the contention that the decision has political motives. The Turkish ambassador to Denmark, for example, explicitly called on the Danish MFA Undersecretary to take a political decision and shut down Roj TV.[1] Wikileaks cables have also revealed that closure of the broadcaster was used as a bargaining tool to convince Turkey to support former Prime Minister of Denmark Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s bid to become NATO Secretary General.[2] Throughout this period it is clear that Turkey had been pressuring Denmark to close the station.

Roj TV immediately lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court and requested that the revoking of the broadcast licence by delayed until the full appeal process is complete.

Following the verdict, Roj TV’s management board stated that they were willing to take the case all the way to the European Court of Human Rights if need be. “Kurds have been denied free speech in many countries and now also in Denmark,” the board said in a press release. “It is unavoidable that Kurds will see the verdict as demonstrating that [the Danish state] doesn’t want to discuss the actual facts of the situation and that political and other motives were instead at play.”

The decision comes a delicate time when a peace process between Turkey and the Kurds is continuing and a ceasefire remains in place. Hopes remain high for a positive outcome of the talks that have been opened up between Turkish government representatives and Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan.

The issues at stake are high for not only is there a clear principle of freedom of speech involved, the voice of the Kurds should not be stifled at this crucial moment when all sides need to be heard if dialogue is going to have a chance of success. For any lasting peace to be achieved the issues will need to be fully debated by the Kurdish side and the people need to be informed about developments in order to be able to accept any agreements that may emerge. Roj TV is a popular channel among Kurds, whom it provides a reliable source of information and it has been playing a valuable role in informing the audience about key political developments.

The argument that the channel is simply a mouthpiece for Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) propaganda is erroneous and has been refuted by the broadcasters themselves and leading Kurdish organisations who have commented on the ruling such as the KCK and the BDP.

Nevertheless, the Court decision rests on its definition of the PKK as a ‘’terrorist organisation’’ which itself can be open to challenge on several counts. The fact that the PKK is listed by the US, the EU and Turkey is not of itself sufficient to justify the Danish Court’s decision which should not rely on political judgements when deliberating on a legal matter. It is only fair therefore to ask what valid evidence the Court had used which enabled it to come to its decision.  However, even if the close links with the PKK were true, there is in any case a very strong argument for removing the PKK from the terrorism list altogether in view of its commitment to the peace process and the constructive role that its leadership has been playing for several years. The campaign to delist the PKK has actually received a fair amount of support from legal experts and figures who take a close interest in Turkish-Kurdish relations.[3]

Through our familiarity with the programmes put out by Roj TV we are convinced that it is a responsible broadcaster and certainly does not make transmit material that advocates violence. In fact, Roj TV is an extremely important independent television service for millions of Kurdish people and should be allowed to continue broadcasting. The Kurds, who have for too long been denied their basic rights such as the right to freedom of speech by Turkey and other countries in the Middle East, should not now be denied those same rights by a European democracy such as Denmark.

**First signatories: Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers; Noam Chomsky; John Berger,** writer/journalist; **Professor Penny Green,** International State Crime Initiative, Dickson Poon School of Law. King’s College, London; **Mike Mansfield QC,** President of Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers; **Roy Greenslade,** Professor of Journalism, City University; **Baroness Helena Kennedy QC**; **Professor Bill Bowring**, Professor of Law, president of the European Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH); **Jeremy Corbyn MP**; **Louise Christian,** human rights lawyer; **Natalie Bennett**, leader of the Green Party of England and Wales; **Margaret Owen OBE**, Director, Widows for Peace through Democracy (WPD); **Mary Davis**, Visiting Professor of Labour History at Royal Holloway, University of London; **Radha D’Souza**, School of Law, University of Westminster; **Richard Harvey,** Garden Court International and International Association of Democratic Lawyers; **Frances Webber,** retired barrister; **Melanie Gingell,** barrister, Doughty Street Chambers; **Bronwen Jones,** barrister, Tooks Chambers. **Akif Wan**,Kurdistan National Congress UK; **Tony Simpson,** Editor,  The Spokesman, journal of The Bertrand Russell Peace  Foundation; **Jonathan Fryer,** writer/broadcaster; **Karlos Zurutuza,** journalist; **Anna Bragga,** journalist; **Isabel Käser**, Monocle Magazine/Peace in Kurdistan; **Orsola Casagrande,** journalist; **Dr. Dafydd Iwan,** B.Arch., LL.D, Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales, Past President; **Barry White**, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, EFJ; **Jenny Jones** AM, Green Group, City Hall, London; **Martha Jean Baker**, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; **Kariane Westrheim**, Associate Professor, University of Bergen; **Maire Daley**,Lecturer, The City of Liverpool College; **Karthick RM,** journalist, TamilNet; **Dr Alan Semo,** PYD representative in UK; **Les Levidow,** CAMPACC; **Anne Gray,** CAMPACC; **Saleh Mamon,** CAMPACC; **Raya Feldman,** Hackney Migrants and Refugee Support Group (personal capacity); **Mansoor Jaffer,** Communication Officer, Kurdish Human Rights Action Group, South Africa; **Jean Lambert MEP; Ali Has,** solicitor advocate; **Dr. Andy Higginbottom,** Principal Lecturer, International Politics and Human Rights; **Ozlem Murray,** Kurdish Federation UK**; Cigdem Karaalioglu,** Kurdish Federation in UK; **Arin Banirad,** Chair, Kurdish Community Centre; **Arman Banirad,** Manager, Kurdish Community Centre**; Eda Fidan,** Social Worker London Borough of Islington Council; **Aysegul Erdogan,** Kurdish Federation UK & CAMPACC; **Dr** **Janroj Keles,** Lecturer London Metropolitan University; **Councillor Jonathan Bloch**, Liberal Democrats;  **Alain Hertzmann,** Branch secretary London North West Branch  9708, UNITEtheunion, UK; **Stephen Smellie,** Deputy Convenor, UNISON Scotland; **David Morgan,** journalist/Peace in Kurdistan Campaign; **Melanie  Sirinathsingh**, Peace in Kurdistan Campaign; **Estella Schmid,** Peace in Kurdish Campaign & CAMPACC.; **Felix Padel,** British writer and Professor, Rurual Management, Jaipur, India; **Derwich M.Ferho**, President of Kurdish Institute Brussels; **Dogan Ozguden,** journalist/Info-Turk Chief Editor; **Sanar Yurdatapan,**musician and human rights activist, Turkey; **Desmond Fernandes,** policy analyst and genocide scholar; **Mary Southcott**, Political Consultant; **Professor Hovhanness I. Pilikian,** Historian; **Dr Egbert Rooze**, Doctor of Theology**,** Belgium; **Filip De Bodt,** Community councillour LEEF, Herzele, Belgium; **Dr Yussef Anwar** Rep of the Kurdish Patriotic Movement in UK; **Kani Areef ,** Postgraduate, UCL; **Denis Arbet Nejbir,** PhD student at Queens University, Belfast; **Dr Ozlem Galip,** University of Oxford**; Birgul Yilmaz,** PhD student, SOAS**; Hikmet Tabak,** broadcast consultant; **Hisyar Ozsoy,** Assistant Professor of Anthropology/The University of Michigan-Flint, USA; **Elke Tindemans**, councillour / CD&V;   **Karwan Mahdi,** PhD student;   **Kaveh Ghobadi,** student;  **Onur Gunay,** PhD Candidate, Princeton University Anthropology Department; **Harry van Bommel,** Member of Parliament in The Netherlands; **Lynne Colley,** Assistant to Vice president of Soran University; **Sarah Parker,** translator; **Iratxe Urizar,** Lawyer and member of the Basque Observatory of Human Rights; **Massoud Sharifi Dryaz,** PhD Student at École des hautes études en sciences sociales, France,Paris; **Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Dr phil.**,researcher on linguistic human rights, retired; **Neil Taylor** LL.M, MCIPR, Solicitor/Journalist

[1] <http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06ANKARA1723_a.html>

[2] <http://kurdishrights.org/2013/07/14/roj-tv-the-victim-of-turkey%E2%80%99s-political-games/>

[3] Peace in Kurdistan Campaign and CAMPACC are appealing to the UK, EU and Turkish governments to lift the ban on the PKK. [The appeal can be viewed online.](http://peaceinkurdistancampaign.wordpress.com/activities/new-appeal-lift-the-ban-on-the-pkk/)

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