

26th October 2008 Hackney demo for Kurdish freedom struggle: report from Hevallo

Hevallo went on a demonstration yesterday in London in support and solidarity of the Kurdish Freedom Struggle and to protest against the physical attack on the leader of the Kurdish Movement, Abdullah Ocalan. It was fantastic!

Millions of Kurdish people have protested in the last week, coming onto the streets in every city in Turkey, Kurdistan and European cities including London. And again yesterday hundreds of thousands of Kurds demonstrated. See here [<http://www.gundemonline.org/haber.asp?haberid=63222>] for reports from Turkey and Kurdistan.

Yesterday's demonstration in London was well attended with every section of the Kurdish community demonstrating their disgust at events in Turkey against Abdullah Ocalan. It was a normal demonstration in every way except in one very abnormal and discomfoting aspect. The police presence and attitude was clearly designed to attempt to 'criminalise' the Kurdish community. An attempt that failed miserably.

Community representatives had told of their anger and disgust at the attitude of the police when they went initially to request permission to hold a demonstration. A senior officer at Stoke Newington Police Station had initially refused saying "It's a waste of tax payers money" and "This is a civilised country....".

One of the community representatives, beginning to get slightly agitated at the ignorance of this obnoxious man, asked the officer to have a look out of his window and look at all of the restaurants, shops and business's around his police station, set in the heart of the Kurdish community in North London. "All of them are Kurdish and all of them pay their taxes. Now do you also know where is the cradle of civilisation? No? Kurdistan. And if you are not going to allow this demonstration, fine. Goodbye, the Kurdish people are angry, lets see what happens if they cannot march and protest in a democratic and peaceful way!"

The officer, now getting worried, called him back and begrudgingly gave permission for the march but only after putting pressure on community representatives to sign a piece of paper banning any flags showing support of Abdullah Ocalan and the Kurdish Freedom Movement.

Aggressive stares from groups of police and police photographers photographing the assembled members of the Kurdish community was the scene that greeted me as I arrived on the demo. A police control vehicle and hundreds of policemen with high ranking officers 'giving instructions' over their walkies talkies in great earnest.

It was incredibly intimidating and sad to see the British Metropolitan Police doing the same dirty work as the Turkish regime. Hevallo, infuriated, grabbed the megaphone and stopped the demonstration, then turned to the senior police officer in charge of policing the demo, with his megaphone, and said directly to him,

"It is sad and shameful that the British Metropolitan Police are accepting the lies and labels of the Turkish regime and collecting intelligence for the Turkish Generals. After many decades of Turkish repression towards the Kurds the police still do not understand that the Kurdish Freedom Movement is a legitimate movement fighting for basic political and human rights in Turkey. You should feel ashamed of yourself!"

I then held high the green, yellow and red flag of the Kurdish Freedom Movement and waved it directly at the officer who now was paying attention. "I am proud to fly this flag of the Kurdish Freedom Movement!" To which the demonstrators cheered and also raised all of the HPG, KCK and Abdullah Ocalan's flags into the air with pride. They had been brought on the demo in principled defiance of the Turkish/British Police ban.

Trying to 'criminalise' the legitimate struggle of the Kurds has been the determined policy of the Turkish racist state for decades. When I got home, I spoke to my mother in law on the phone, who had also demonstrated in Turkey and she laughed when I told her of all the police on our demo, "I am sitting here with bruises all over my body where they beat us with batons, at least you only got your pictures taken!"

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