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“We need to understand that without Öcalan, we cannot reach a solution to the Kurdish problem and it is very clear that the war cannot end. Öcalan is needed to ensure a democratic and peaceful solution.”

ANF talked with Fabian Molina, Swiss National Parliament Socialist Party MP and a member of the Foreign Relations Commission.

The interview addressed many issues, from the hunger strike led by HDP Hakkari MP Leyla Güven to isolation against Kurdish People's Leader Abdullah Öcalan.

Molina MP visited Kurdistan and Turkey in October 2018, as part of a Swiss delegation.

As someone who visited Northern Kurdistan before, you have had the chance to follow events closely. How do you assess the current state of politics in Turkey?

With the delegation, we had a number of meetings in cities such as Mardin and Diyarbakır. The rights violations that we saw then has grown stronger today. For example, many of the people we spoke to that day were arrested later. In Turkey democracy and human rights are in a suspended state. Today's government does not respect the basic norms of democracy and human rights. We saw that the current government had completely destroyed fundamental freedoms in Turkey. The different identities in the country, like the Kurds, should have the right to make politics, yet they are denied this right. Because of the repression by the government it is very difficult to work towards a solution of these issues and the current process is a very difficult one.

Today, HDP deputy Leyla Güven is leading the hunger strikes to break isolation against Öcalan in many centers, especially in prisons. What do you think of this?

First of all, I would like to say that I am in solidarity with all hunger strike activists. Today, politicians are on hunger strike; these people rightly carry out such an action. Because there are no alternative areas and options to express their political ideas and demands. At the same time, these hunger strikes are an indication that the Kurdish people are not without options despite all the pressures. The hunger strikes are important for the removal of

isolation against Öcalan.

The isolation on Öcalan must be abolished and talks with Öcalan should be resumed. Because there can be no lasting solution without involving him in it.

Why do you think Öcalan's role is important?

Öcalan is a key figure in the struggle of the Kurdish people. At the same time everyone knows well that Öcalan has a great importance in the solution of the Kurdish question and plays a key role at this point. It is very difficult to reach a solution to the Kurdish question without Öcalan. This is why I support hunger strikers' demands, and I argue that universal fundamental human rights should be granted equally to everyone, including Öcalan. Considering the importance of Öcalan's role, it is unacceptable to prevent him from meeting with family, lawyers and political delegations. Talks with Öcalan and peace negotiations should be resumed.

Today many people of Turkey see Öcalan not as a hero but as a 'terrorist'. This understanding needs to change, the question to be asked is: Is it possible to have a solution without Öcalan? We need to understand that without Öcalan, we cannot reach a solution to the Kurdish problem and it is very clear that the war cannot end. Öcalan is needed to ensure a democratic and peaceful solution.

Unfortunately, it doesn't look like Erdoğan and the AKP government are interested in finding a solution to the Kurdish problem and bringing democracy to the country. This is because Erdoğan is trying to survive and keep the votes of nationalist groups.

Here is where emerges the importance of EU policies to counter Turkey. Europe should tell Erdoğan 'enough is enough', and urge him to work for peace and a democratic Turkey.

Do you think that Europe's policy strengthens Erdoğan?

It surely does. First of all, being a member of NATO means that Turkey is allowed to get away with almost everything. And this of course strengthens Erdoğan. Neither NATO nor Europe have left Erdoğan alone, and this is a big problem. Second, the refugee agreement between the European Union and Turkey, has clearly strengthened Erdoğan. Indeed, he is using this treaty against Europe. The European Union remains silent in the face of what happened, which is a shame for Europe.

How do you evaluate the attitude of Switzerland?

Switzerland is neither a NATO member nor a European Union member. Switzerland frequently calls on Turkey to respect human rights. It is forcing Turkey to respect democracy and fundamental human rights. On the other hand, free trade agreement with Turkey continues. At the moment we are discussing the renewal of this treaty, a bad signal. Switzerland is putting pressure on Turkey but that's about it. It should have a harder relationship with the Erdoğan regime.

How do you assess arms trade with Turkey?

Erdoğan ignores international law in Syria as he does in his own country. Everybody sees that he ignores international law in Syria. He must be condemned and arms should not be sold to Turkey. Erdoğan's rights violations in Syria, unfortunately, are not discussed or not much in the international arena, this situation should change. International law and human rights apply to everyone and to every country and should be taken as a basis by everyone.

What role can the Council of Europe or European countries play?

Clearly, the Council of Europe and the European Union should clarify their stance on Erdoğan. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and CPT should play their part, but remember, Turkey is ultimately to decide. For example, when we went to Turkey we asked permission to see Mr. Demirtas but we were not even given an answer.

But despite Turkey's attitude great pressure on the government can be made. Economic and political pressure can be made. First of all, Europe should change its attitude towards Erdoğan.

The biggest task of changing Europe's attitude towards Erdoğan fell on the Kurdish society living in Europe and Switzerland. Unfortunately, the Kurdish diaspora is not so strong on this.

How do you assess the fact that Europe still considers the PKK as a terrorist organization?

Many countries are sending weapons to the Kurds to fight against ISIS, while the PKK is on the list of terrorist organisations in countries such Germany and France. I am proud that Switzerland does not consider the PKK as a terrorist organization. I believe the PKK should not be on the terror organisations list. The PKK is a political organization. I'm an anti-militarist, but I'm in favor of a political solution. And this is very difficult to achieve in Turkey, this is a reality.

On the other hand, international forces should act against the threats issued by Turkey to Kurds in Syria. The withdrawal of the United States is an important decision and I support it. On the other hand, there should be a solution to ensure respect of human rights in Syria and Kurds should not be left alone. All measures should be taken to guarantee the safety of the Kurds.