



To whom it may concern,

Mr Selahattin Demirtaş, former Co-chair of the HDP, stands trial at the Istanbul 26th Assize Court with the charge of “terrorist propaganda” in a speech he had delivered at Newroz celebrations in Istanbul on 17 March 2013. Mr. Demirtaş faces up to five years in prison for this speech.

**The final hearing** of this case, at which both Mr. Demirtaş and MP Mr. Sırrı Süreyya Önder stand trial, will be held on 30 April 2018 (10:30 am) in İstanbul at the Silivri Courtroom No 2. Mr Demirtaş will attend the hearing in person.

Considering the political conjuncture in Turkey, this particular case is more important than even the main case for which Mr Demirtaş has been under arrest since 4 November 2016. President Erdoğan announced that early elections would be held on 24 June 2018. The lawyers of Mr Demirtaş have observed that the Court is violating the most fundamental principles of law to speed up the process and convict him as soon as possible. The court did reject all demands of defense lawyers in the last hearing on April 16. We suspect that a decision has already been made; Mr Demirtaş will be sentenced and barred from politics so that he could not impact presidential elections on 24 June 2018. That is why this case of Demirtaş is very crucial with respect to the struggle against President Erdoğan’s authoritarianism and we invite everybody concerned about the future of democracy in Turkey to observe this particular hearing on 30 April 2018.

Please find below the full text of Mr Demirtaş’ speech, which is the subject of this case where freedom of expression and the right to politics are under trial.

**Pervin Buldan – Sezai Temelli**

**HDP Co-chairs**

Ps: The statements of Mr Demirtaş that are quoted in the indictment are written in bold.



## Selahattin Demirtas' Newroz Speech in Kazlıçeşme, Istanbul

17 March 2013

I am honored to address you in such a magnificent, such an enthusiastic Newroz, in the presence of you, by looking at such shining eyes. You are all welcome! Happy Newroz to you all for thousand times. Happy Newroz to you, our precious people, who have filled this square with a passion for freedom, with love for peace! Newroza we pîroz be!

You, as the children of a country whose language and name have been banned, have transformed these squares into freedom squares by turning Newroz, which they have tried to ban, into a Newroz with the fire, flame, with the spirit of fire until today. We are honored with you; we are proud of you.

I am sure that all the peoples of the Middle East, all the oppressed peoples, will warm once again this year with the magnificent warmth of the Newroz of 2013. Until today, every Newroz fire has illuminated a new darkness. It enlightened our way, showed deaf ears, blind eyes the demands for freedom. For those who have lost their way or line, "Here is the way to freedom," said every Newroz. Here comes the Newroz of 2013 Newroz with good news for a new era, a new process. Welcome, Newroz!

And of course, of course, Newroz has come to these days with heavy prices, heavy pains, and losses that could not be underestimated. **On this occasion I would like to commemorate with respect all our martyrs in the person of our friends Sakine, Leyla, Fidan<sup>1</sup>, all our martyrs who turned the struggle for freedom into a people's revolution and made Newroz the Newroz.** I express our gratitude to those who brought us to these days and to all the values that make us one heart and one voice in these squares, I yearningly commemorate them.

Dear friends, I am sure you, each of you, our people, from 7 to 70 each and every one of our children are closely following as much as us – perhaps more than us - all the political developments. I will not give a long speech about political developments here.

Istanbul Kazlıçeşme Square, this picture here, is already the biggest message. This is Newroz's message to those who are willing to understand, to see, to hear. This is the will of the process, its resolution language, and its photograph.

Here is how the solution will be, say hundreds of thousands people, as all the oppressed in Kazlıçeşme Square hand in hand, here are all the others of the society, here is a photograph of

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<sup>1</sup> Sakine, Leyla and Fidan are the three Kurdish women who were assassinated in Paris in early 2013 by a Turkish man with ties to Turkish intelligence.



the solution. Those who wonder what will come out of this process should look at this photograph carefully. The solution is in this area, in this square, with Kurdish, Turkish, Armenian, Syriac, Laz, Circassian, woman, man, student, youngster, laborer, who coexist in their own languages, identities, cultures, flags, and colors, side by side. Here is the solution, the stance at Kazlıçeşme Square. If there will be a result, if a true freedom comes out of this process, the solution will be the reflection of this square on the whole of Turkey.

We have underlined one thing persistently in all the messages we have given, in all the speeches we have given until this day, since the People's Labor Party (established in 1990, trans.) We said that talking and negotiation would solve the Kurdish issue. And we have been persistent on this method in our demands. You have rallied and marched for thousands of times for this. You tried really hard to make this method essential. And in all these messages we gave, we wanted to bring the issue to these days. We have been working hard so that Turkish youth, Kurdish youth would not die for the solution to this problem, so that there would not be any more bloodshed. Now the point we come to is the result of this struggle, this effort, and the losses. This is not the grace or gift of someone to us, to the people of Turkey.

I wish we had come to these days a long time ago. I wish we had developed an understanding to negotiate and talk through the peace process before thousands and tens of thousands of young people, our children, have died.

But unfortunately, it is late, but even if it is late, we have always said that a process as such is the most meaningful and the most valuable since the beginning. We have always said that the best method is an official negotiation between Mr. Ocalan and a government-supported state delegation in Imralı, we never gave up this idea, we insisted on it, because this was the right thing to do.

Now look, some people are disturbed by this. Without even offering a single solution, they are shouting, "Why are there negotiations with Ocalan, the PKK and the BDP?" Some say, let's flatten the Kandil (a mountainous region used as PKK's command center in Northern Iraq, translators' note). Look at the solution they propose! Are you politicians, or bulldozer operators? You should produce a solution! Solution! Those who do not have a single solution proposal are trying to flatten or raid everywhere day and night, to provoke everyone. I want to ask them from here; have you ever been in Şırnak? **Have you ever guarded a watchtower at midnight in Şırnak? I would like to invite those who say they will flatten Kandil; let them put a G3 weapon on their shoulder and stay on watch at the Gabar Mountain for one night and then see whether Kandil can be flattened (or razed to the ground) or not?**

It is easy to speak from Ankara, of course. The children of this people don't want to kill or be killed. Haven't you understood that yet? Turkish and Kurdish youth don't want to kill or be killed. I am telling those who speak of homeland, nation and Sakarya: Look, leave aside voluntary military service, they passed a law to establish a private army with a monthly salary



of 3,000 liras; there are 50,000 positions for this army but not even 5,000 people applied for it. You give money, you offer early retirement, but young people do not want to fight. Haven't you understood that yet? That is the message of Turkish youth and Kurdish youth. "Sit down, talk about this problem and solve it politically," is their message.

No harm will come from talking and discussing the problem around a table. Isn't it the time to talk about a problem that has 200 years of history, caused 29 rebellions, dozens of massacres that killed hundreds of thousands of people? How many more people should die? How many more years need to pass? For 100 years, they have been trying to provoke, divide, and rule peoples of Anatolia, Kurdistan and Mesopotamian lands by making them hostile to and fight each other. Now we say that it is not a destiny. We say that all peoples, all the oppressed, can create their own future hand in hand, together, equally and freely.

We call for developing a language of brotherhood instead of a language that consumes up all sides and makes them hostile to and fight each other. We say that we can create a society, a model, a system in which everybody can win, where everyone can live freely in his/her own language and identity. We are having difficulty in understanding why this makes some people uncomfortable. It's really hard to understand. The Kurds say, "We would like to live in this country together, but equally and with dignity. We want to develop a solution within the borders of this country with our language, identity and culture." If you oppose this (proposal), then you need to offer a more democratic model. If you cannot propose anything, if you do not have a solution proposal, then you should keep silent, sit at your place, not shade it, and not try to provoke people.

Look, we know this very well, but all our friends, and people of Turkey who believe in peace, in brotherhood should know this; peace does not mean to surrender. Peace is the right to take what is rightfully yours. We, as the oppressed of Turkey whose rights have been usurped, taken away by force, want to take them back. Peace is that simple. Peace is not taking something out of someone's pocket and putting it into someone else's pocket. The language of Kurdish people belongs to Kurdish people. Let them speak in their own language. The faith of Alevis belongs to Alevis; let them live their faith. Let non-Muslims, Armenians and all religions and cultures live their faith freely. This is peace.

If there obstacles before this, before the realization of this, we took risk and responsibility to politically overcome them together. And this is not a discourse we are using for the first time. There are those who get goose bumps when they hear the word peace. There are people in this country who shudder and fear when they hear the word peace.

Look, I express this sincerely; we, as the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), have never acted with a love for seats, with an interest in personal advancement. We have considered peace as a sacred value. And as a requirement of our mission, as a requirement of the order we received from our people, we have been working day and night to stop the bloodshed, and



came to this point, with your efforts and the resistance and stance of Kurdish pioneers. We have no doubt that these people who created this (translator's note: peace and resolution) process and who brought this process to this point will be enthusiastically and decisively committed to this process from now on.

A great majority of the society of Turkey surely supports this process, we are aware of it. But everyone should know this. Peace is not a simple calculation business. Rights and freedoms are not the subject of calculations or polls. If all the people of Turkey want peace and stop the war and bloodshed, they have to be sensitive to rights and freedoms. Because what we call peace does not come from the sky. Peace is not an empty balloon lacking rights, freedoms and democracy. Peace will have the ground to flourish, if the demands of Kurds, the oppressed, Alevis, and of all cultures and languages are built on a democratic and libertarian Constitution. Otherwise peace will slip away like a flying balloon and disappear in the sky.

The AKP government, too, should approach the period ahead by learning from the past in this whole process. We, as the BDP, have supported and will continue to support the steps taken by the government in terms of negotiations. But we are the Peace and Democracy Party, and they are the AKP. We are not forming an alliance with the AKP; we will not have electoral collaboration with the AKP. As an opposition party, we will continue to use our right to democratically oppose the ruling party anytime and anywhere. But we will continue supporting the peace process, the language of peace, and a negotiation table so that people will not die and young people will not kill each other.

If there are people who cannot read, understand or have difficulty in understanding the process correctly, they should once more look into the history of Kurdish people's magnificent resistance. If the Kurdish people had solely acted with nationalist, racist feelings and motives, thinking only of themselves, believe me there would have been much more bloodshed in these lands and no one would have been able to speak of the fraternity of peoples. But with their struggle the Kurdish people have become the driving force of democratic struggle in Turkey. They have played a pioneering role in opening all clogged channels of democracy. They have paid a very heavy price to bring this struggle to the current stage.

But now the Kurdish people, its youth and pioneers say they want to continue their struggle with the method of democratic politics from now on. However, in response to this demand and wish, if some persistently say neither the Kurdish nor the Turkish youth should lay down arms and military operations should continue, then this means inciting war. This should be noted.

The Kurdish people have now reached the halfway point. Peace struggle requires long-lasting patience. At the same time it is an issue of determination, faith, and courage. We trust our democratic political struggle. We trust our organized structure. We trust our people's altruistic



stance. We trust the struggle you continue hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder. We are not excited about this process by looking at the AKP's position.

The government can only proceed with your demands and your strong stance. To direct those who are in power, to determine the direction of this process are in your hands. Peace or peace process does not mean rivalry. Look, there is a revolutionary process in Rojava today. The people of Rojava, with their organized and determined will, day by day, weave their own future. If they had not been organized, if they had not stayed together, they would have faded away. The Rojava revolution is the most powerful indicator of what an organized people can do. On this occasion, from Kazlıçeşme we send our greetings to the people of Rojava, the Kurdish youth, women, and all the revolutionaries who are building a revolution there knot by knot. We congratulate their Newroz as well.

Again, we are sending our warm greetings from Newroz squares to all of our politician friends who are held hostage in prisons. Happy Newroz to them. We promise you that they will also be in this square with us on the next Newroz.

We will empty all the prisons with our struggle, our stance, and our resistance. Of course we will remove all prisons from being places of hostage bargaining. We will develop our solutions with our own hands by opening the channels of democratic politics.

Without further extending my speech, once again I bow respectfully before this magnificent stance of hundreds of thousands of people who have filled this square despite this cold weather.

I would like to thank all the friends who have worked hard for Newroz preparations to provide us with such a magnificent meeting. I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to all the friends from other parties, NGOs, the Peoples' Democratic Congress, our artist friends who warmed our hearts with their art, songs, and instruments, and to the members of press. Once again I wish happy Newroz to you all. May our/your way be open!