

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan



Newsletter

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Committee Members 2017

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Since the committee was elected back in April we've been busy organising and taking part in events and actions to highlight Kurdish issues and raise funds for the "Scottish School" that we want to help to build in Kobane. This newsletter will update you on some of our recent activities and let you know about some forthcoming events. Our facebook page has more information and links to other pages and we hope to get our website up and running soon so that in future we can send you links to more in-depth news items and articles.

On a very wet Saturday in July we protested in Princes Street to put the spotlight on the Turkish Government's



attacks on Afrin. As Kurdish fighters were battling ISIS the Turkish state was bombing YPG positions. To highlight this we distributed leaflets, asked members of the public to sign petitions and we also wrote to MPs and MSPs asking them to raise the issue with the UK and Turkish Governments. We received support from Politicians, Trade Unions, Trades Councils and individual friends of the Kurds. (Thanks to all of you who sent messages!) Chris Stephens, MP, wrote to the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson to pursue the issue but the response from the Foreign Office was discouraging.

Three Kurdish families in Edinburgh had a nasty shock in late August when Scottish police raided their homes because they'd been reported as having taken part in "terrorist activities". (In reality, a New Roz party—Kurdish New Year celebrations!) The Kurdish Community Centre in Wester Hailes was also forcibly entered. No one was arrested and nothing illegal was found, but innocent families were intimidated and their hopes that they would be safe from persecution in Scotland were shattered along with the community centre doors. MPs and MSPs are now taking up the case with Police Scotland. The malign influence of the Turkish Consulate in Edinburgh is clear and perhaps recent successes in getting positive attention for Kurdish issues at a national level in Trade Unions and in Scottish politics have helped to prompt this backlash in attempted smears and malicious allegations. Read the statement from the Kurdish Community Centre about the impact of the raids [here](#).

On a more positive note, progress has been made in setting up a cross-party Kurdish Group in the Scottish Parliament. Stephen Smellie, SSK Co-Convenor, has met with Ross Greer, MSP, to agree meeting dates for 2017/2018. Each meeting will have a different topic and agenda. We hope that MSPs will welcome the opportunity to join the group and learn more about the Kurds, their culture and the challenges they face. The October meeting of the parliamentary group is likely to focus on the outcome of the forthcoming Kurdish independence referendum and Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan is hosting a **Kurdish Independence Referendum Debate** on Saturday **16 September at 11am** in the Unite offices, John Smith House, 145/165 West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 4RZ. Jonathon Shafi of the Radical Independence Campaign has agreed to speak and he and Dr Goran Abdullah from our SSK committee will discuss and debate the hopes, fears and issues surrounding the Kurdish referendum and compare with our experience in Scotland. SSK committee member Dr Sarah Glynn will chair the debate. All welcome.

Once Isis is defeated and the war in Syria is over, the Kurds will need help to rebuild their villages, towns and cities. Schools are badly needed, as war abruptly disrupted education. Children really need the security and stability of school and that's why we're holding a fundraising dinner towards building the "Scotland School" in Kobane. So come along to SSK member Honar Kobani's "Rojava Restaurant" (97 Morrison Street, Edinburgh EH3 8BX) on **Wednesday 20th September** at 7pm and enjoy a warm welcome and a Kurdish dinner (set meal, drinks not included) in the company of guest speaker Ross Greer, MSP. Tickets cost £15 each and are available from committee members - or e-mail us.



SSK Co-Convenor Stephen Smellie and committee member Alex Currie attended the **Kurdish Cultural Festival**, in

Quorn, Leicestershire on 30th July 2017 organised by the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU), the Freedom for Ocalan campaign and other groups fighting for oppressed Kurds. Stephen ran a workshop and spoke at the meeting and Alex also addressed the meeting. Another speaker was Dilek Öcalan (*pictured left with Stephen and Steve Sweeney, journalist from the Morning Star*). Dilek is the niece of the esteemed Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. Öcalan has been held in solitary captivity in a Turkish prison on the island of Imrali since 1999. (Just referring to Öcalan as "esteemed" will cost you a six month prison sentence in Turkey.) It is Öcalan's ideas and writing that inspired the democratic, self-governing, secular and gender-equal model of governance operating in Rojava, with its cooperative-based economy. Dr Sarah Glynn, SSK member, attended a conference on Rojava earlier this year in Hamburg – "*Challenging Capitalist Modernity*" and she recently published an article in online magazine "Bella Caledonia" about her experiences and the ideas that were shared at the conference. You can read it [here](#)



Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan is involved in a number of events taking place in October that are included in the programme for the Edinburgh World Justice Festival. The details are below. We hope you will be able to attend, support and enjoy these events, but even if you can't make any of them, a donation for the school is always very welcome! We will also be commemorating **World Kobane Day** on Wednesday 1 November at the Unite Office 145/165 West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 4RZ at 6.30pm, when the Lord Provost, Eva Bolander, will be in attendance. Book a place through <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/world-kobane-day-tickets-37870328171> A £5 donation is requested, with profits going towards the "Scottish" school building project for Kobane. We hope to see you at some or all of these events.

**From Edinburgh to Istanbul:
Solidarity with
Political Prisoners**

Mon 9 Oct, 6.30pm
Augustine United Church
41 George IV Bridge,
EH1 1EL
UNISON, National Union
of Journalists and Scottish
Solidarity with Kurdistan
Hear the voices that the Turkish
Government wants to silence.
Moving replies from prisoners
to our postcards.

**Artists for Peace
in Kurdistan**

Tues 3 Oct, 6.30pm-8.30pm
Rojava Restaurant
97 Morrison Street, EH3 8BX
Scottish Solidarity with
Kurdistan and Dove Tales
Artists, including poet Allan
Cameron and author James
Kelman, reflect on the Kurds'
struggle for democracy and
equality. Treat yourself to
something to eat and some
Scottish and Kurdish culture.

**Rojava: The Revolution
In Syria**

Sat 7 Oct, 6pm-8pm
**City of Edinburgh Methodist
Church, Nicolson Street,**
EH8 9BX
Scottish Solidarity with
Kurdistan and Edinburgh
University Kurdish Society
Exhibition of Soran Qurbani's
photographs and discussion of the
revolution in Rojava and the fight
against ISIS.

The photographic exhibition
runs from 3rd until 14th October.