

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan



Newsletter

April 2018

C/o Unison, 23 Beckford Street, Hamilton, ML3 0BT Email: Scottishsolidaritywithkurdistan@outlook.com

Committee Members 2017/18

Roza Salih (Co-Convenor), Stephen Smellie (Co-Convenor), Margaret Gallacher (Secretary), Paul Toner (Treasurer), Murat Gullen, Sarah Glynn, Honar Kobani, Saleem Salih, Goran Abdullah, Alex Currie, Jan Xal, Sarah Collins, Ryan Boyle, Sean Baillie.

The steering committee above will be up for re-election at our Annual General Meeting, which will take place on Saturday 21st April 2018 at 11am at the Unite Office, John Smith House, 145-165 West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 4RZ. All are welcome but only members will have a vote.



For those of you wondering what's happened to our Facebook page, as far as we can gather it has been taken down for 30 days (or longer) for breaching their "standards" by displaying photos/videos of Öcalan (mostly in the background at demos and at a New Roz event). See page 2 for more on Öcalan. The SSK website is now being updated and some Facebook articles and info will be moved there. **Website: SSKonline.co.uk**

On Tuesday 27th March the cross-party Kurdish Group met in the Scottish Parliament to celebrate International Women's day and to discuss Kurdish issues including the Turkish invasion of Afrin. Women and their guests gathered at the invitation of Ruth Maguire, SNP MSP, to hear from SSK speakers Roza Salih and Ezgi Denli. There was also a Skype session with Dilber Yosef from Kobane. In answer to a question from John Finnie, Green Party MSP, Dilber asked for help from the international community to draw attention to the desperate situation in Afrin. The plight of families there was underlined when an audience member told of the death of five of his family in Afrin and his remaining family's plight trapped under occupation, without food and water. The politicians present agreed to explore means of support for Afrin and expressed support for Kurds in Scotland. Read more about the meeting [here](#). Recent negative contacts with the police and the blocking of an SSK room booking at Edinburgh University were also discussed and again the politicians were supportive. A meeting with the Scottish Justice Secretary has been promised.

Kurdish New Year (New Roz) was celebrated in Edinburgh on 25th March with a successful event in Penicuik. (Photos and video unavailable due to Facebook!) Kurds and Scots celebrated together with music, dancing and great speeches including excellent contributions from SSK's Alex Currie and Stephen Smellie. In Scotland we will soon celebrate May Day, an international celebration of working people, led by trade unions, when we gather to celebrate our working class history. You'll find a link to the Glasgow event [here](#) It would great if Kurds and Scots would join marches and events across Scotland to celebrate together – consider yourself invited – see you there?



Edinburgh

Saturday 5 May 2018

Assemble 11.30am top of Johnston Terrace, march at 12noon, rally at 12.30pm at Pleasance Theatre

May Day 2018

Glasgow

Sunday 6 May 2018

Assemble 11am George Square, march at 11.30am, rally at 12noon at Royal Concert Hall

Aberdeen

Saturday 5 May 2018

Assemble 11am Rubislaw Terrace, march at 11.30am, rally at 12.15pm at Castlegate

Dundee

Saturday 28 April 2018

Assemble Cowgate Underpass, march at 1pm, rally at 1.30pm at Burns' Statue, Albert Square

Irvine

Saturday 5 May 2018

Assemble 11.30am, Vineburgh Comm. Centre march at 12 noon, rally at 1pm Vineburgh Comm. Centre

Towards the end of February we were shocked to hear of the arrest of Saleh Muslim, revered Kurdish politician, who had been visiting the Czech capital of Prague as part of a European speaking tour. Some of you will remember his visit to Scotland in 2016. He was arrested on a warrant from Turkey and after various protests and a diplomatic tug-of-war, he was eventually released. His arrest, however, is further proof of the malign influence and power Turkey is allowed to wield across Europe.



On 5th February Ercan Ayboga visited Scotland and gave a talk on the “Revolution of Rojava” at University of Strathclyde Student’s Association. Ercan is co-author of a book with the same title and is an environmental engineer and ecological activists who has been living in North Kurdistan. During his visit he met other academics and students in Glasgow and Edinburgh and also had discussions with Edinburgh World Heritage about their contract to restore Kurdish cities in Turkey that the state has helped to destroy. Ercan was able to raise awareness about Turkey’s history of destroying Kurdish heritage and Turkish human rights abuses. Kurds are concerned about Kurdish artefacts and heritage being erased by Turkey as part of the efforts to ethnically cleanse Kurdish areas. Ercan also spoke in Edinburgh on 6th February but the original venue was switched when the room booking wasn’t accepted by Edinburgh University, a matter that we will pursue. Ercan’s talk on Rojava was recorded and will be available on the SSK website soon.



Turkey’s obscenely named “operation Olive Branch” has culminated in the invasion of Afrin and President Erdogan is now carrying out ethnic cleansing in the Kurdish areas of Syria. The Turkish army is allied to groups linked to Al Qaeda, and Turkish soldiers are fighting alongside men who were previously fighting with ISIS/Daesh. Turkey’s actions go against everything that the Western democracies claim to stand for, yet we wait in vain for our governments to protest – and the Turkish government is emboldened to take its aggression further. Western states won’t upset their NATO ally, so they turn a blind eye to the destruction of the democracy that NATO was supposed to protect. The EU relies on Turkey to police its borders, so it looks away when Turkey brings further violence to Syria, even though this is destroying the best hope for a peaceful future that would mean refugees would no longer need to flee. Read reasons why everyone should care about Afrin [here](#).



Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdish leader whose ideas inspired democratic federalism in Rojava, must be assumed to have spent his 69th birthday on 4th April in solitary confinement in Turkey, as he has for the last 19 years. We have not used his picture here as it is outlawed on much of social media, but SSK sent him a birthday card and message of support by way of the UK’s ambassador to Turkey. Öcalan is unlikely to receive it, or gain freedom soon, but there is some reason to feel hopeful as Durham Miner’s Gala has adopted “Freedom for Öcalan” as their international campaign this year, which will raise more awareness of Öcalan’s grim situation. Gala day is Sat 14th July, so look out for more information on fringe meetings and speakers, accompanied by Kurdish music and dancing.

SSK has organised a number of protests across Scotland in recent months to highlight the invasion of Afrin, which has received little attention in mainstream media. One of the most successful protests was the unveiling in Dundee of a human “statue” of Kawa, a Kurdish resistance hero, which attracted attention from the crowds and the press. Read more about Kawa in Sarah Glynn’s article for Commonsense [here](#) with more press coverage [here](#). Users of the Kurdish Community Centre in Edinburgh also spent a Sunday afternoon emailing MPs and MSPs asking them to ensure that Turkey is held to account and pressurised into withdrawing from Afrin. Afrin has now been discussed in parliament and recently EDMs were lodged by Chris Stephens, SNP MP and Chris Williamson, Labour MP, condemning Turkey.



We hope you’ve enjoyed this update. If you want to contact us or unsubscribe, email us. All feedback is welcome. If you haven’t already renewed your SSK membership or affiliation be sure to update it in time for the AGM. Cheques can be posted to the address above and cash/cheques will be accepted on the day of the AGM.