

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan

Newsletter

October 2018



C/o Unison, 21 Beckford Street, Hamilton, ML3 0BT

Email: Scottishsolidaritywithkurdistan@outlook.com Website: www.sskonline.org.uk

Committee Members 2018/19

Roza Salih (Co-Convenor), Stephen Smellie (Co-Convenor), Margaret Gallacher (Secretary), Paul Toner (Treasurer), Murat Gullen, Sarah Glynn, Honar Kobani, Goran Abdullah, Medeni Yanat, Keith Sharples, Mike Picken, Mia Gubbay.

Our annual general meeting in April 2018 wasn't quorate so we reorganised and the AGM was eventually held on 6th September at the Unite office in Glasgow. Members were given a verbal report on the work that had taken place during the previous year. The new committee was elected (as above) and members attending took the opportunity to update their membership. The speaker at the meeting was Sarah Glynn, who gave an interesting PowerPoint presentation on her recent visit to the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria



Sarah had been invited by the Kongreya Star (a confederation of Kurdish women's groups in Syria) to take part in a women's delegation to the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria earlier this year. She described the secular, inclusive system of grass-roots democracy that has been established, where women have equal status. Sarah illustrated her talk with photographs of the people and places she visited, including Kobane, Qamishlo and Manjib. She also met families from Afrin, where the democratic system had been established for longer but has now been destroyed by the Turkish invasion. A question and answer session followed the talk. Sarah is very willing to share her experiences and if you are part of an organisation that would like to hear of her visit first hand, contact us to arrange it.

The AGM also received an update on the "Scotland School" that we are raising funds to build in Kobane. Stephen gave the background to the school project, explaining that it came about when he and Paul from SSK had visited Suruc in 2015 as part of a wider delegation and had visited refugee camps where they met leader and teacher Fayza Abdi. When asked what support Scotland could give she had asked for help to build a school in Kobane and said that once built it could be named the Scotland school. Stephen explained to the AGM that we had reached our first milestone in fundraising and that land has been identified and purchased. Fayza will send a copy of the plans and we now need to step up our fundraising activities so that the building stage can actually begin. There are a couple of short [films here](#) featuring some of the children who will benefit from the school. Our first fundraising event will be a dinner on Tuesday 27th November in Rojava Restaurant, 97-101 Morrison Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8BX. Tickets are £15 (doesn't include drinks) and will be available soon, so get in touch with us to book your place. Look out for news of future fundraising events and if you have any ideas for fundraising or if you want to make a donation to the school, please contact us. Also, if you haven't yet renewed your membership to Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan, you can send a cheque to the address above or contact us for bank details to make payment. Membership is £5 if you are working, £3 if you are not working and £25 for organisations to affiliate.

World Kobane Day on 1st November celebrates the brave women and men of Kobane who were put under siege by ISIS in 2014 but fought and repelled them. This heroic resistance is recognised across the world and has been commemorated on 1 November each year since. We invite you to join us on Thursday 1st November at 6.30pm at the Unite office, John Smith House, 145 West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 4RZ to mark the anniversary.

In July 2018 Durham Miners Gala adopted the Trade Union backed Freedom for Öcalan campaign as their international campaign. Kurds joined the “big meeting” to hear Ibrahim Dogus give an inspiring speech asking for solidarity for the Kurdish cause, in deeds as well as words. He explained how Kurdish civilians are being killed, persecuted or displaced, while Kurds fight on the front line against ISIS. He spoke of the Kurdish struggle for freedom and he told the meeting about Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdish national leader, suffering cruel and inhuman treatment, jailed in Turkey since 1999 without a fair trial, kept in solitary confinement and denied visits from lawyers and his family. Ibrahim compared Öcalan to Nelson Mandela saying that, like Mandela, he is integral to the peace process for his people. Öcalan has called for a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish question and it is his political vision of a democratic, secular, grass-roots autonomy,



with equality and human rights for all, that inspires so many of the Kurdish fighters battling the evil of Isis. Ibrahim urged people to sign up to the Freedom for Öcalan campaign. He also asked for pressure to be put on Erdogan’s totalitarian government in Turkey and he encouraged us all to write letters to newspapers and to MPs, use on-line media to raise awareness of Kurdish issues and to do all we can to support the Kurds and help to free Öcalan. The Facebook link to Ibrahim’s speech is [here](#). If you’re interested in learning more about the situation in Turkey, The Morning Star is hosting an event, **“[Repression in Turkey – Eyewitness accounts](#)” on 12th November at 6.30pm** at the STUC building, 333 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6NG. Speakers will give detailed accounts of the attacks on trade unionists, journalists, academics and the Kurdish community and Kurdish and Turkish exiles will speak about their experiences, hopes and fears for the future. The event is supported by the Freedom for Öcalan campaign and Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan.

Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan will hold a stall at the SSP Conference and CND Conference on 10th November at 10am at Renfield St Stephen’s Church, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow. Other forthcoming events as follows:-

World Kobane Day

**Thursday 1st November 2018
6.30pm**

**Unite Office, 145 West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 4RZ.
(Room 4)**

Gathering to show solidarity with Kurds across the world.

STUC St Andrew’s Day anti-racist march and rally

**Saturday 24th November
Assemble 10.30am
Glasgow Green,
Greendyke Street, Glasgow
City Centre,
G1 5DB.**

[March](#) with us to oppose racism.

Cross Party Group on Kurdistan

**Wednesday 7th November 2018
6pm Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.**

All welcome, but for security reasons, arrive by 5.45pm and attendance must be advised to us in advance by email.

Fundraising Dinner - Rojava Restaurant, Edinburgh

**Tuesday 27th November
7pm, Rojava Restaurant
97-101 Morrison Street,
Edinburgh, EH3 8BX.**
Join us to enjoy great food and good company raising funds to [build the Scotland School](#). Tickets £15 each. (Doesn’t include drinks.)

Book Event – [Your Freedom and Mine: Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish Question in Erdogan’s Turkey](#)

**Thursday 15th November 2018
7.30pm to 9pm Lighthouse
Bookshop, 43-45 West Nicolson
Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9DB.**

**Friday 16th November 2018
6.30pm at the Unison Office,
Bell Street, Glasgow, G1 1LQ.**

**Saturday 17th November 2018
Dundee (venue to follow)**

Author and Editor Dr Jeff Miley talks about his emotionally powerful book, an account of the Kurdish struggle for freedom and self-determination.