

Chronology of the PKK: From group formation to party (1973–1980)

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Abstract

The Kurdistan Workers Party (Partîya Karkêren Kurdistan, PKK) is often considered a latecomer that miraculously survived the 1980 military coup. Yet the establishment of the party in 1978 was preceded by a long process of group formation that started shortly after the 1971 military coup in Turkey. This article presents a chronology of the PKK during the 1970s. The main aim of this chronology is to show how the PKK came into being as the result of the intensive groundwork of a committed cadre, covering the process of ideological group formation (1973–77) and party building (1978–80). The chronology presented here ends in 1980 when the PKK withdrew many of its militants that were not arrested or killed to Syria and Lebanon following the military coup of September 12 of that year. This withdrawal became the beginning of a reorganization process leading to the start of the guerrilla insurgency in 1984.

Introduction

The Kurdistan Workers Party (Partîya Karkêren Kurdistan, PKK) was formally established on 26–27 November 1978, announcing its

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name and existence in July 1979 (Akkaya 2016). The party is often considered a latecomer that miraculously survived the 1980 military coup. Yet the establishment of the party was actually the product of a long process of group formation that started shortly after the 1971 military coup in Turkey. This chronology presents an overview of the process of group formation and institutionalization of the PKK during the 1971-1980 period.

The main aim of this chronology is to show how the PKK came into being as the result of the intensive groundwork of a committed cadre, covering the process of ideological group formation (1973–77) and party building (1978–80). The chronology takes as its starting point the 1971 military coup, the killing of the leaders of the revolutionary left in 1972, and the subsequent search for new perspectives. It was in this search that the first steps were taken that would eventually lead to the establishment of the PKK (Jongerden and Akkaya 2011).

In the 1960s and 70s, universities were a significant space for discussions about revolutionary politics (Christofis 2021). Many of the students involved were from a modest background and had come to cities like Istanbul and Ankara through a scholarship that opened the way for them to higher education. They arrived at the universities in a turbulent time. Hope for revolutionary change was sweeping through Turkey, like in other countries in the world, and voices until now suppressed, like those of workers, peasants, Alevi, and Kurds became hearable (Batuman 2010, Gunes 2012, Houston 2020). The coup of 1971 silenced these voices. The leaders of the revolutionary left were killed, and public space fell under the scrutiny of the military junta. In response, private locations, such as the houses and dormitories where the students lived, became the first political spaces for a regrouping (Jongerden 2017). It was in this context that the group formation took place that would result in the PKK.

The choice of starting point for this chronology may be questioned. One could argue that not the coup but the Eastern Meetings should be used, as these mass meetings, held in 1967, broke the fear of publicly expressing the demand for another “East” (Gundogan,



2015). One could also argue that the starting point should be later, with for example the foundation of the Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association in 1973, as this became an important space for political group formation. However, this chronology starts with the 1971 coup as it was in the context of the aftermath of this coup and the killing of the leaders of the revolutionary left that the actors who would play a key role came into contact with each other and started to become a group.

A chronology not only tends to have a somewhat arbitrary starting point but is also, by necessity, incomplete in listing of significant events. What is to be deemed a significant event and what not is not always clear. For example, according to PKK records, 167 of its members were killed in the 1973–80 period (see Annex 1). Only a few of those are mentioned in this chronology because their deaths are considered as pivotal moments in group formation. The killing of Fevzi Aslansoy in 1976 is mentioned since it was at his funeral that the group first presented itself to a wider public under the name “Kurdistan Revolutionaries”—a significant step towards institutionalization. Another example is the killing of Haki Karer in 1977, which marked a further institutionalization—as a political party named the “PKK.”

This chronology is compiled from numerous interviews and PKK (and other) publications; a selected list of publications employed is appended (Annex 2). The chronology ends in 1980 when the PKK withdrew to Syria and Lebanon many of its militants that were not detained or killed following the September 12 military coup. This withdrawal became the beginning of a reorganization process leading to the start of the guerrilla insurgency in 1984. The post-1980 period(s) will be the subject of subsequent chronologies.

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Chronology

- March 12, 1971** The military stages a coup and stays in power until it eventually allows elections on October 14, 1973 and a return to civilian administration. In the two-and-a-half years in which the military rule, they introduce new laws that strengthens the state against civil society and curtail civil liberties.
- 1972** In 1968, the People’s Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu*, THKO) and in 1970 the People’s Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Parti-Cephesi*, THKP-C) had been established as politico-military organizations, with the idea that an armed struggle, guided by a political party, could bring necessary social changes to Turkey. In 1972, however, the leaders of both parties are killed, through the passing of death sentences and in military operations, or imprisoned.² Large-scale arrests and imprisonments of the sympathizers of both organizations are carried out.
- March 30, 1972** Cadre of the THKP-C and THKO were killed in Kızıldere, Ankara, having been trapped in the course of a hostage operation in which they had intended to exchange military personal against the convicted, but as yet unexecuted THKO leaders Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Huseyin Inan. Those killed in Kızıldere were: Mahir Çayan (THKP-C), Hüdayi Arıkan (THKP-C), Cihan Alptekin

² The leaders of the THKO, Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Huseyin Inan, were arrested at the beginning of 1971, and were executed on May 6, 1972.



(THKO), Nihat Yılmaz (THKP-C), Ertan Saruhan (THKP-C), Ahmet Atasoy (THKP-C), Sinan Kazım Özüdoğru (THKP-C), Sabahattin Kurt (THKP-C), Ömer Ayna (THKO), and Saffet Alp (THKP-C). Only Ertuğrul Kürkçü was captured alive and would later become a member of parliament for the Democratic Peoples Party HDP (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*). The hostages held by the group, the Britons Gordon Banner and Charles Turner and the Canadian John Law, were also killed during the raid. They were believed to be NATO radar technicians.

April 8, 1972 Abdullah Öcalan is arrested and imprisoned for his involvement in the organization of a university boycott in Ankara to protest against the killing of the THKP-C and THKO militants in Kızıldereli and the implementation of the death sentence for Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Huseyin Inan. Originally from the Amara village in Urfa, Öcalan had become a THKP-C sympathizer when studying at the Law Faculty of Istanbul University in the year 1970–71. He had participated in a meeting at the Istanbul Technical University, where Mahir Çayan was one of the speakers. Öcalan moved to Ankara, where he continued his study at the Political Science faculty of Ankara University in the year 1971–72. He stayed in a dormitory of the university, until his arrest. He is detained in the military prison in Mamak.

May 6, 1972 THKO leaders Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan, and Huseyin Inan are executed in Ankara.

October 24, 1972 Öcalan is released from Mamak military prison.

November 1972 Öcalan is not allowed to return to the student dormitory where he stayed before his imprisonment. This is the result of new measures taken by the military junta to crack down on political radicalism at universities. Through one of his cellmates in Mamak, Doğan Fırtına, with whom Öcalan had studied at Ankara University, Öcalan is referred to two students from the Black Sea coastal region. One, Kemal Pir (1952–82), a THKP-C sympathizer, is a Turk from Gümüşhane (south of Trabzon) who studied at the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography of the University of Hacetepe. The other, Haki Karer (1950–77), a THKO sympathizer, is a Turk from the Ulubey district in Ordu. After high school, he had gone to Ankara in 1971 to study Science at Ankara University. In Ankara, Pir and Karer shared a house in the Emek district. Öcalan moves in and stays with them in the apartment for about a year, to the end of 1973 or beginning of 1974, after which they disperse to flats in other parts of Ankara. The three of them—Abdullah Öcalan, Haki Karer, and Kemal Pir—are part of the core group of what would become the PKK.

March 1973 Öcalan organizes a meeting in the form of a picnic at the Çubuk Dam near Ankara. The participants, all students, discuss the thesis that Kurdistan is a colony and the right to self-determination. In PKK historiography, this meeting is taken as the starting point of a process of group formation that preceded the establishment of the PKK. Apart from Abdullah Öcalan, participants in the meeting are Ali Haydar Kaytan and Musa Erdoğan (both from Dersim [Tunceli]), Mustafa Aksakal (from Hilvan, a district in the province of Urfa), Halil Aslan (Elazığ), and İsmail Bingöl (Varto, in Muş). During the year, most of the participants go their own way. Only Abdullah Öcalan and Ali Haydar Kaytan stay together.

May 18, 1973 The leader of the Communist Party of Turkey Marxist-Leninist (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi Marksist-Leninist*, TKP-ML), İbrahim Kaypakkaya, dies as the result of the torture he is subjected to in Diyarbakir prison. In PKK statements, Mahir Çayan, Deniz Gezmiş, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya are described as symbols of their struggle for freedom and socialism in Turkey³.

November 1973 The student organization Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association (*Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği*, ADYÖD) is established. The Association is housed in an apartment on Izmir Avenue in Kızılay, in Ankara city center. The establishment of the Association follows the withdrawal from the military junta, which had held power since the 1971 coup, and a return to parliamentary government. ADYÖD is established by the Socialist Workers Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi*, TSİP), but the 200-odd delegates representing some 2,000 member students soon elect a new board of eleven representatives. These included Abdullah Öcalan and Haki Karer, who would both play important roles in the process of group formation leading to the establishment of the PKK, and Nasuh Mitap and Taner Akçam, who had THKP-C roots and would play an important role in the establishment of the Revolutionary Left (*Devrimci-Yol*) movement, predecessor of the Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi*, ÖDP), founded in 1996 and changed in 2019 to the present-day Left Party (*Sol Partî*). ADYÖD's Executive Committee is composed of Nasuh Mitap, Yaşar Gören, and Abdullah Öcalan.

Among the Association's members at this time are students who would play an important role in the establishment of the PKK; in addition to Abdullah Öcalan and Haki Karer, there is Baki Karer, Kemal Pir, Ali Haydar Kaytan, Duran Kalkan and Cemil Bayık. ADYÖD is closed after a police raid, on December 4, 1974, and the mass arrest of 162 students.

1974 The group around Kemal Pir, Haki Karer, and Abdullah Öcalan is growing, and they leave their apartment in the Emek district. Abdullah Öcalan, Ali Haydar Kaytan, and Cemil Bayık rent an apartment in Yukarı Ayrancı, close to the Turkish Parliament. Haki Karer, Kemal Pir, and Duran Kalkan move to an apartment in Dikimevi. Others rent apartments in other neighborhoods in Ankara. These apartments become crucial sites of ideological group formation and recruitment, providing a space for the further development of the group.

Next to these apartments, university dormitories, - classes, and - cantinas are also important meeting and recruitment places. For example, Cemil Bayık had met Kemal Pir at the Language, History, and Geography Faculty at Ankara University, Pir introduced Bayık to Öcalan, and Bayık introduced Duran Kalkan to the group. Haki Karer had recruited Mazlum Doğan. Kemal Pir would later say about this period: "We were busy convincing people to work with us; that was the kind of work I was engaged in. If three hours were needed to convince people, we would

³ See <https://pkk-online.com/en/index.php/sehitlerimiz/104-in-memory-of-the-martyrs-of-socialism> (last date of access May 16, 2023)



be busy for three hours; if 300 hours were needed to convince them, we would be busy for hours. We were working to convince people.”⁴

January 1975 The Association for Higher Education (*Ankara Yüksek Öğrenim Derneği*, AYÖD) is established in Ankara. Unlike ADYÖD, which allowed various factions and currents within a re-emerging left, AYÖD adopts a more sectarian character. The founders, mostly THKP-C sympathizers, would later form the leftist political organization Dev-Yol. As political boundaries solidify, the housemate network around Öcalan, Karer, Pir, Bayık, Doğan, Kalkan, and others, becomes a closer knit mesh of kindred spirits that gradually develops into a coherent, independent organization. In 1975, the group settled on a name, the “Kurdistan Revolutionaries” (Turkish: *Kurdistan Devrimcileri*; Kurdish: *Şoreşgerên Kurdistan*)—although some knew them as “*Apocu*,” followers of Apo, the nickname of Abdullah Öcalan or as the “National Liberation Army” (*Ulusal Kurtuluş Ordusu*, UKO).⁵

January 1976 The Kurdistan Revolutionaries gather in an apartment in the Ankara neighborhood of Dikmen rented by students from Siverek (a district in Urfa). At this “Dikmen meeting,” the group decide to develop the organization in (Turkish) Kurdistan. This marks a major change in the political geography of the movement, whose recruitment activities had mainly been concentrated in Ankara. The movement also institutionalizes. They decide to establish a center (*merkez*) of the movement, of which Abdullah Öcalan is to become chairman and Haki Karer his associate.

May 18, 1976 Fevzi Aslansoy, a student at Hacettepe University and sympathizer of the group around Öcalan, Karer, Pir, and the others, is shot and killed as he tries to remove a slogan of the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) from the wall of his house near the university. The funeral takes place in his hometown of Suruç, Urfa. Some 15 members of the group attend the funeral, and together they prepare a declaration, for the first time under the name “Kurdistan Revolutionaries.” A fight over control of the funeral takes place with the People’s Liberation (*Halkın Kurtuluşu*, HK), and the military intervenes and arrests several participants, including Mehmet Hayri Durmuş and Kemal Pir.

December 31, 1976 – January 1, 1977 Under the disguise of a New Year’s Eve celebration, a meeting takes place at an apartment in the Dikimevi neighborhood of Ankara. At this meeting, the organizational work carried out that year (1976) in several parts of Kurdistan is evaluated. It is decided to intensify this effort and identify people as responsible for it in regions. Following the meeting, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries present themselves as a group to other revolutionary organizations in a meeting at the office of the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (*Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği*, TMMOB), on Konur Sokak in Kızılay.

⁴ For Kemal Pir’s defense see: <https://www.saradistribution.com/kemalpir.htm> (last date of access May 16, 2023)

⁵ In their court defense, Mazlum Doğan, Kemal Pir, Hayri Durmus rejected both these names. For Mazlum Doğan’s defense see: https://www.saradistribution.com/mazlum_dogan_savunma.htm; for Hayri Durmus his defense see: https://www.saradistribution.com/hayri_durmus_savunma.htm (last date of access May 16, 2023)

April–May 1977 Following the TMMOB meeting, Öcalan begins a tour through Kurdistan. He starts in April at Ağrı, visits Kars, Karakoçan (in Elazığ), and Diyarbakır, and reaches Antep in May. At these meetings, he gives seminars on the history of colonization and the distinctive ideology of the movement. Dozens of people participate.

May 18, 1977 Haki Karer is assassinated, the killing performed in Antep by a rival Kurdish group, Red Star (*Sterka Sor*). Karer is not the only member of the movement to be killed as a result of infighting within the revolutionary left; on the contrary, the list is long. The PKK's "Album of Martyrs" lists dozens of militants killed by left-wing movements such as the HK and Revolutionary People's Unity (*Devrimci Halkin Birliđi*, DHB) or by the National Liberators of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Uhusal Kurtuluşçuları*, KUK), mainly as the PKK expanded in geographies in which they were strong.

With the killing of Haki Karer, the Kurdistan tour of Abdullah Öcalan ends abruptly. Karer's "martyrdom" has a big impact on the group and leads to—or speeds up—the institutionalization of the group. It is decided to turn the organization into a political party that will, in its own language, organize an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggle for the independence of Kurdistan and brotherhood in the Middle East.

June 3, 1977 Kemal Pir is arrested in Ankara after a gun is found on him. He is transferred to Ordu Prison, from which he escapes.

November 21–22, 1977 A meeting is organized in Diyarbakır, where about 20 members of the group discuss the formation of a party and a draft program.

April 1978 A meeting is organized in Elazığ, again with party formation on the agenda. At this meeting, an "editorial board" headed by Mazlum Dođan is formed that will become responsible for publishing *Independence (Serxwebûn)*, the publication organ of the movement.

May 1978 The group publishes a booklet, "In Remembrance of the Proletarian and Internationalist Revolutionary Haki Karer" (*Proleter ve Enternasyonalist Devrimci Haki Karer Anısına*). The booklet is i) a promise of retaliation for the death of Haki Karer, ii) a reckoning with the left and its perversion by Kemalism, iii) a promise to fight against capitalist exploitation and Turkish colonialism in Kurdistan, and iv) a commitment and expression of determination to continue the struggle. A week of action is announced, in which the booklet and wall posters are distributed to commemorate Haki Karer.

May 19, 1978 Members of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries commemorate Haki Karer in various cities and towns in Kurdistan. In Hilvan, a group gathering to distribute posters for the commemoration is spotted by the Suleymans, an extended family (clan) working with the state and the local police. The activists are surrounded, resulting in an exchange of gunshots. Halil Çavgun, a key organizer of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries in Hilvan, is wounded and then executed. His killing triggers an armed struggle between the Kurdistan Revolutionaries and the Suleymans, who largely control Hilvan and the district municipality.



In 1979, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries publish a leaflet—“Understand the True Path and Revolutionary Struggle Rising in Urfa Region” (*Doğru Yolu Kavrayalım ve Urfa Yöresinde Devrimci Mücadele Yükseliyor*)—analyzing the struggle in Hilvan in the context of contradictions of a class of (Kurdish) landlords working with the (Turkish) colonial state on the one hand and oppressed (Kurdish) peasants on the other hand. Leftist and Kurdish political parties are criticized for their passivity.

A second publication in 1979—“The Memory of Haki Karer and Halil Çavgun is Immortal” (*Haki Karer ve Halil Çavgun’un Anısı Ölümsüzdür*)—discusses the killing of Karer and Çavgun as an attempt to prevent the development of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries, while another—“Ideology and Politics: How it emerged” (*İdeoloji ve Politika Nedir: nasıl ortaya çıkmıştır*)—considers the role of politics and ideology in the context of the historical development of domination and class contradictions.

July 1978 Öcalan finishes writing the Manifesto “The Path of the Kurdistan Revolution” (*Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu, Manifesto*) in a house in Diyarbakır. In the manifesto, the history of Kurdistan is presented as that of a colony and its liberation which is a struggle against both political domination and economic exploitation. Like other national liberation movements in the 1960s and 70s, the group aims at the establishment of an independent state as a means to ending colonial domination and relations of exploitation.

November 8, 1978 Kemal Pir is arrested in Pazarcık, a town in Maraş and then moved and detained in Urfa on November 17. Eight months later, on July 15, 1979, he escapes from prison.

November 27–28, 1978, The founding congress of what is to be named the “PKK” is held in the village of Fis, near Lice, Diyarbakır—the name of the party is proposed later, in April 1979, at a meeting of the Central Committee. At the congress, the establishment of a party is discussed and the manifesto accepted. The 22 delegates at the meeting and the revolutionary martyrs are determined as the party’s first members.

Abdullah Öcalan is elected as the party’s General Secretary. Mehmet Karasungur and Sahin Dönmez are elected as members of the Executive Committee, with Cemil Bayık replacing Karasungur when he withdraws. In addition to these (Öcalan, Karasungur, Dönmez, and Bayık), the Central Committee includes other longtime activists, like Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, Mazlum Doğan, and Baki Karer. Karasungur, who is leading the struggle in the Siverek-Hilvan area (northwest Urfa), is elected as responsible for the military affairs of the party. Within a year, however, arrests require a reshuffling of responsibilities.⁶

⁶ The congress in Fis was hosted by the family of İsmet Zoğurlu. One of his sons, Seyfettin, was among the delegates, and another, Alaattin, was responsible for the security of the meeting. Seyfettin and Alaattin Zoğurlu were withdrawn from Turkey after the 1980 coup to receive military training in Lebanon. Seyfettin was taken prison by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) while resisting the Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon in 1982; after his release, he returned to the PKK and was active in a unit operating along the Iraq–Turkey border until 1986, when he was killed in a clash with Turkish troops in Uludere. Alaattin was killed together with another militant on June 11, 1987 in Melikahmet, Diyarbakir city, when the apartment they were staying at was surrounded and attacked by police.

The delegates are assigned to provinces (e.g., Cemil Bayık, Sakine Cansız, and Hüseyin Topgider represented Elazığ, and Mehmet Şener and Ferzende Tağaç represented Batman).

This is a full list of the congress delegates and their present or last relevant situations:

1-Abdullah Öcalan (prisoner at Imrali island in Turkey); 2-Cemil Bayık (active in the PKK, holds a leading position); 3-Şahin Dönmez (after being arrested, cooperated with the police and betrayed his former comrades; founded a Kemalist organization in prison; killed by the PKK in Istanbul, 1990); 4-M. Hayri Durmuş (died on hunger strike in Diyarbakir prison, September 12, 1982); 5-Mehmet Turan (killed by the PKK in Mardin, 1979, accused of being a Turkish agent); 6-Mehmet Cahit Şener (founder of PKK-Vijin, killed by the PKK in Qamislo, northeast Syria, November 1, 1991); 7-Ferzende Tağaç (left the PKK and active politics); 8-A. Haydar Kaytan (active in the PKK, holds a leading position, though unconfirmed claims were made he was killed in a cross-border operation of the Turkish Armed Forces in 2021); 9-Mazlum Doğan (member of the Central Committee of the PKK, committed suicide, March 21, 1982, in protest against the torture and inhuman treatment he and the other political prisoners were submitted to); 10-Sakine Polat/Cansız (Killed in Paris in 2013 by an assailant allegedly with connections to the MHP and Turkish intelligence); 11-Hüseyin Topgider (left the PKK in 2000, lives in Germany); 12-Ali Gündüz (works with the Turkish security forces); 13-Kesire Öcalan/Yıldırım (left the PKK, lives in Sweden); 14-Duran Kalkan (active in the PKK, holds a leading position); 15-Ali Çetiner (left the PKK, lives in Germany); 16-Faruk Özdemir (left active politics after release from prison); 17-Abbas Göktaş (unknown); 18-Abdullah Kumral (killed by Israeli troops invading Southern Lebanon, 1982); 19-Baki Karer (fled from the PKK in 1984, lives in Sweden); 20-Resul Altınok (killed by the PKK, 1984); 21-Suphi Karakuş (killed by the PKK, 1985); 22-Seyfettin Zoğurlu (killed in combat, 1986).

December 13, 1978 The Executive Committee meets in Diyarbakir. This is the first meeting after the founding congress. The steps to be taken next are discussed.

December 19–26, 1978 A largely nationalist (Grey Wolves) and Islamist mob rages through Maraş. The military and police watch and do not intervene. The official death toll is 105 people, but unofficial figures say close to 200 people died. In 1979, *Serxwebûn* publishes “An Evaluation of the Maraş Massacre” (*Maraş Katliamı Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme*). In the brochure, the massacres of Alevi and Kurds by a predominantly Sunni-Turkish mob are discussed in the context of the changing nature of the regime in Turkey. It is argued that the republic is deviating from its classical Kemalist policy and fuelling divisions between Alevi-Sunni and Turkish-Kurdish communities to counter the growing revolutionary movement in the country.

December 26, 1978 Martial law is declared in 13 of the then 67 provinces in Turkey, namely, Adana, Ankara, Elazığ, Bingöl, Erzurum, Erzincan, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Kars, Malatya, Maraş, Sivas, and Urfa. Later, in April 1979, martial law is extended to six more provinces: Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, and Tunceli.



- January 5, 1979:** The first meeting of the Central Committee is held in Diyarbakir. The members of the committee are Abdullah Öcalan, Cemil Bayık, Mazlum Doğan, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, Baki Karer, and Şahin Dönmez.
- February 1, 1979** The second meeting of the Executive Committee is held in Diyarbakir. It was decided to prepare the founding declaration of the party and discuss the party's name and emblem at the next meeting.
- February 1979** The PKK Founding Declaration is discussed at a meeting in the Günaydın Apartment in Diyarbakır's Ofis neighborhood. A brochure with the declaration is distributed among cadres in early May.
- Mart 1979** The first issue of *Serxwebûn* is published.
- April 5, 1979** The PKK Central Committee holds its second meeting at the Günaydın Apartment. The name of the party is chosen: the "Kurdistan Workers Party" (*Partîya Karkêren Kurdistan, PKK*).
- April 27, 1979** The third meeting of the Executive Committee is held.
- May 6, 1979** Rural worker Nadir Temel is elected as mayor of Hilvan. He had participated in the elections as an independent candidate but is a member of and supported by the PKK.
- The election of Temel is the result of an intensive and violent struggle between the perpetrators of the killing of Halil Cavgun and the Suleymans. The PKK retaliates against the killing of Halil Cavgun, and, after a series of armed confrontations referred to now as the "Hilvan Resistance" (*Hilvan Direnişî*), the Suleymans apologize, and their representative resigns from the mayorship in early 1979. In the elections that follow, Nadir Temel is elected as mayor, while three women, Durre Kaya, Saadet Yavuz, and Emine Hacıyusufoğlu are elected to the municipality council. This is the first time that women have been elected to such a position.
- May 12–17, 1979** Several members of the PKK are arrested in Elazığ, among them Şahin Dönmez, Sakine Cansız, and Aytekin Tuğluk. Dönmez becomes a turncoat (repellant), and the state learns from him about the PKK's founding congress.
- July 1, 1979:** The Executive Committee (Abdullah Öcalan, Cemil Bayık, and Duran Kalkan) meets in Urfa. It is decided that deciphered cadres (i.e., those identified by the state) are to be replaced and that Öcalan will cross the border into Syria, as the authorities are looking for him.
- July 2, 1979** Öcalan crosses the border with Syria (between Suruç and Kobani) and travels via Damascus to Lebanon, where he makes contact with Palestinian organizations.
- July 30, 1979** The PKK announces its establishment. While leaflets are distributed throughout Kurdistan, Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*) MP and tribal leader Mehmet Celal Bucak is ambushed in Siverek. He survives, but Salih Kandal, one of the organizers of the party in the Siverek-Hilvan region, is killed.
- September 9-10, 1979** PKK members Cuma Tak, Abdurrahman Manap, Ali Çat, Sadun Demirkoç, and Cuma Bozkoyun, who were active in Siverek, are killed by Bucak's men and their bodies thrown into the Euphrates river.
- September 1979** A first group of 15 members of the PKK joins Abdullah Öcalan in Lebanon for guerrilla training. The group includes Mahsum Korkmaz, Delil Doğan,

and Seyfettin Zoğurlu, at whose house in Fis the PKK had been established the year before. Kemal Pir, who has escaped from Urfa prison, joins them.

October 1, 1979 Mazlum Doğan is arrested in Viranşehir (Urfa) while on his way to a Central Committee meeting, along with Yıldırım Merkit and Aysel Çürükkaya.

October 14, 1979 Edip Solmaz is elected as the mayor of Batman. He is an independent candidate but supported by the PKK. As a son of a worker in the oil industry, Solmaz positions him as a man of the people, as opposed to representing a landed titleholder (aga or sheik [*ağa, şeyh*]), someone who considers himself above the people (as an elevated, even divine, societal class).

Solmaz receives 3,876 votes, 199 ahead of the candidate of the landlords, Fahrettin Özdemir, who comes second with 3,677 votes, and well ahead not only of the rival KUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party (*Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi*, KDP) candidates, but also those of the MHP and Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP). The election underlines the rapid expansion of the support base of the PKK, as two years previously, the candidate supported by the movement had received only 129 votes.

On November 12, 1979, after being in office for 28 days, Edip Solmaz is killed by an unknown assailant in front of his house. His killing triggers a chain of violence between the clan of the landlord, Raman, and the PKK.

November 29, 1979 PKK cadres Mehmet Hayri Durmuş and Ferhat Kurtay are arrested in Kiziltepe.

January 1980 Clashes between the National Democratic Unity (*Ulusal Demokratik Güçbirliği*, UDG) and PKK occur and intensify in Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakir, and Batman. UDG is a collaboration between the KUK, Freedom Path (*Özgürlük Yolu*), and the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Association (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Derneği*, DDKD).

April 21–27, 1980 The PKK plans a week of action under the name “Red Week” (*Kızıl Hafta*). This leads to violent confrontations in the Mardin region with the KUK, which sees its support base decreasing rapidly.

May–June 1980 PKK members return from military training in Lebanon return, among them Mehmet Sevgat, Delil Doğan, Kemal Pir, and Mahsum Korkmaz.

August 12, 1980 Kemal Pir is arrested in Siirt. Mahsum Korkmaz manages to escape arrest.

September 12, 1980 The Turkish Armed Forces stage a coup and form a military junta headed by Kenan Evren. This unleashes an unparalleled period of repression, including the imposition of a regime of torture on political prisoners.

Hilvan mayor Nadir Temel and councilors Durre Kaya, Saadet Yavuz, and Emine Hacıyusufoğlu are arrested and removed from office.

October 29, 1980 In Bloka, a village near Mardin, five PKK members are killed in a confrontation with the army. The confrontation is commemorated as the “Bloka resistance” (*Bloka direniş*).

September–December 1980 The PKK withdraws its cadres and regroups in Lebanon.



Annex 1: PKK Casualties 1977–80

In the period 1976–80, 167 members of the PKK were killed, according to its own records.⁷ The death toll was highest in Urfa (including Siverek and Hilvan), Mardin (including Nusaybin, Kiziltepe, and Derik), Batman, and the Antep-Adiyaman region.

A considerable number of those killed, as many as 40, lost their lives in confrontations with landlords and their paramilitary forces, primarily in the Hilvan-Siverek and Batman regions.

More than 40 PKK members lost their lives in confrontations with other political parties on the left; 30 of them were killed in confrontations with KUK, mainly in the Mardin region (including Kiziltepe, Nusaybin, and Derik) but also in Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, and Batman. About seven PKK members were killed in confrontations with the HK, mostly in Antep and Dersim. Other deadly confrontations took place with the DDKD, DHB, UDG, and Progressive Youth Association (*İlerici Gençler Derneği*, IGD), a youth organization of the Communist Party of Turkey.

Around 20 PKK members died in confrontations with the extreme right and what are referred to as “traditionalists” (*gericilik*).

Some 30 members were killed by security forces (police and army), and 10 died as a consequence of torture.

5 members of the PKK lost their lives as a result of accidents.

Annex 2: Selected references used for this chronology

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⁷ See: 1976-1984 PKK Direniş Şehitleri Albümü (publisher and place of publication unknown); available at: <https://kurdipedia.org/?lng=13&q=2014072514285977132> (last date of access May 16, 2023)

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