



Kurdish National Congress of North America

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Novemb 09, 2012

For Immediate Release

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Los Angeles, CA – As members of the Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNC-NA) and the Kurdish Americans of California, we will hold a 48-hour hunger strike in front of the CNN building in Los Angeles, starting on Monday, November 12th. This is to express our solidarity with the 10,000 Kurdish political prisoners who have been on hunger strike in Turkey, some of whom since September 12, 2012. With this protest, we want to simultaneously attract attention to the lack of international media coverage of the hunger strike and raise awareness.

Those who have started on September 12 are reaching the 60th day of an indefinite and irreversible hunger strike. Death and serious health problems are imminent, as the US-backed Turkish government refuses to meet the strikers' legitimate demands.

The hunger strikers simply want legal reforms that would allow the use their mother tongue in education and in legal defense, and the ending of the now sixteen-month-long solitary confinement of the imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan so that negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the conflict can restart.

The Kurdish struggle for equal rights has made historic gains in recent years. Turkey has responded by imprisoning thousands of Kurdish democracy advocates, including elected parliamentarians, mayors, intellectuals, lawyers, journalists, students, and human rights defenders. The Kurdish movement continues to call for a democratic solution to the conflict within Turkey's territorial borders. Despite this, the Turkish government has taken an increasingly hard-line attitude. It unilaterally terminated negotiations with the Kurdish movement, intensified military and police operations to repress the Kurdish movement, and prevented Abdullah Ocalan from meeting his lawyers since July 2011.

The root cause of the hunger strike is the Turkish government's refusal to accept a negotiated solution to the Kurdish issue and its endeavors to crush any democratic resistance to its unjust policies. Any adverse outcomes resulting from the hunger strikes will be due to the government's intransigence.

Despite the fact that this hunger strike has reached the borders of death, the international media outlets have mostly remained silent on the issue. This parallels with the attitude of mainstream Turkish national media, who have ignored the hunger strike or reported it very latently and only peripherally.



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The individuals who join this two-day hunger strike want to demonstrate their commitment to a cause that is unquestionably just and right. The Kurdish people in Turkey and abroad have been showing their support to the hunger strikers and their demands through various forms of protests and activities. Family members of the strikers and other concerned people have been alternately waiting in front of the prisons to pressure the government to urgently respond to the striker's demands in a humanist and democratic manner.

As Kurds based in North America, we want to call on the media outlets to practice humane and ethical journalistic standards and not keep their eyes blind and ears deaf on this serious matter. We also call on all people of conscience to ask their public authorities to put pressure on the Turkish government so that it would comply with international laws on human rights. Please reach your political representatives, Turkish consulates and embassies near you as well as human rights organizations and encourage them to take action before the hunger strikes result in death or irreparable damage.

An awareness and sensitivity in international public can save the lives of hunger strikes and contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict by granting the Kurds equal rights.

Please act now. Tomorrow may be too late.
