

INDEPENDENT LEGAL MISSION ON THE PEACE PROCESS IN TÜRKIYE

Post Mission Report | May 2026 - updated September 2026



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LIST OF ACRONYMS







AKP - Justice and Development Party

CHP - Republican People's Party

CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child

DEM - Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party

ECtHR - European Court of Human Rights

EMEP - Labour Party

HDP - Peoples' Democratic Party

ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

MHP - Nationalist Movement Party

PKK - Kurdistan's Workers Party

TIP - Turkish Workers' Party

Yeni Yol - New Path Party

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

2. METHODOLOGY

3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (2024-2026)

4. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

5. FINDINGS OF THE MISSION

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. ANNEX: MARCH-SEPTEMBER OVERVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Legal Mission on the Peace Process in Türkiye (the Mission) is an initiative established under the auspices of the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH) and the Association for Democracy and International Law (MAF-DAD). In addition to lawyers affiliated with these organisations, the Mission was also constituted with the institutional participation of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the Union of Italian Penal Chambers (UCPI) and Esculca.

The objective of the Mission is to assess ongoing developments related to the peace process in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict and to contribute, from an independent and legally grounded perspective, to the achievement of a just and lasting peace. Guided by the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Peace (A/RES/71/189), the Mission seeks to promote a resolution rooted in justice and respect for human rights through dialogue, neutrality, and rigorous legal analysis, while fully respecting the sovereignty and institutional framework of the Republic of Türkiye.

The Mission situates its work within the broader context of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, a complex and evolving issue involving questions of identity, governance, and political participation. Since 1984, the conflict involved armed hostilities between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), alongside ongoing legal and political debates concerning cultural rights, decentralisation, and the application of counterterrorism legislation. The issue engages multiple branches of law, including constitutional law, international human rights law, and, in certain periods, international humanitarian law. Despite earlier attempts at de-escalation, including the 2012-2015 "solution process," structural challenges and competing political interpretations continue to shape both the conflict and the prospects for peace.

Recent developments mark a new phase in the process, particularly following the February 2025 call by PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, for the end of armed struggle. This phase includes ceasefire declarations, renewed political contacts, and institutional initiatives such as parliamentary engagement and discussions on disarmament and reintegration frameworks.

2.METHODOLOGY



The Mission's work is guided by principles of neutrality, transparency and constructive dialogue. Building on the full acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the Republic of Türkiye and its democratic institutions, the Mission seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and concerns surrounding the current phase of the process, while facilitating open and respectful exchanges of views with all relevant actors.

The methodology underpinning this report combines comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultations with extensive desk-based research. During its first visit, the Mission engaged with a wide range of interlocutors, including human rights organisations, civil society actors, lawyers, and political representatives, including members of the "National Solidarity, Brotherhood, and Democracy Commission (the Commission) established within the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye.

In addition to these in-person consultations, the Mission continues to engage with additional stakeholders, including those with whom meetings were not possible due to scheduling constraints. The Mission has also formally requested authorisation to visit İmralı Prison and hopes that this request may be considered in due course.

3 . BACKGROUND OF THE TURKISH - KURDISH CONFLICT

The issue commonly referred to as the Turkish-Kurdish conflict relates to a long-standing political and security dispute involving questions of governance, identity, and political participation within the Republic of Turkey. Since 1984, the conflict has involved armed confrontation between the Turkish state and the PKK, alongside broader legal and political debates concerning cultural rights, local governance, and the scope and application of counterterrorism legislation.[1]

From a legal standpoint, the situation engages multiple bodies of law, including constitutional law, international human rights law, and counterterrorism legislation, and—during periods of sustained hostilities—raises questions regarding the applicability of international humanitarian law.[2] The legal characterisation of the conflict, as well as the relevant normative frameworks governing it, remains the subject of ongoing debate among state authorities, legal scholars, and international observers.

3.1 The Kurdish Issue

Kurdish communities make up the second largest ethnic and linguistic group in Türkiye and are estimated to represent between 15 and 20 per cent of the country's population, although precise figures are difficult to determine due to the absence of official ethnic census data. Kurdish populations are concentrated primarily in the southeastern and eastern regions of the country, but significant Kurdish communities also reside in major urban centres across western Türkiye.[3]

The modern Republic of Türkiye emerged following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. The new state was established in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and adopted a unitary constitutional framework emphasising territorial integrity and a highly centralised administrative structure.[4]

During the early decades of the Republic, several uprisings took place in regions with significant Kurdish populations, including the Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925) and the Dersim Rebellion (1937–1938). These uprisings were suppressed by the state.[5] In the years that followed, state policies placed estrictions on the public use of the Kurdish language and expressions of Kurdish cultural identity.[6]

Interpretations of these developments differ. Some analyses situate these policies within the broader context of state-building following the collapse of a multi-ethnic empire, while others consider that they contributed to enduring grievances concerning cultural recognition, political representation, and regional socio-economic disparities.[7]

The contemporary armed phase of the conflict began in 1984 when the PKK, founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan, launched an insurgency against Turkish state institutions and security forces.[8]

Initially advocating the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, the organisation later reformulated its political programme to emphasise various forms of autonomy and decentralised governance within existing state borders.[9] The PKK has carried out attacks against military and security personnel and, at times, against civilian targets.

Türkiye designates the PKK as a terrorist organisation under domestic law. The same designation is maintained by the European Union and the United States Department of State.[10]Armed confrontation intensified, particularly during the 1990s, resulting in significant casualties, destruction of some 3000 villages[11] in Kurdish regions by state forces and large-scale internal displacement.[12] The capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 led to a temporary decrease in hostilities, although armed clashes resumed intermittently in subsequent years.[13]

Under the Constitution of Türkiye, the state is defined as an indivisible entity with a unitary structure. Kurdish identity is not formally recognised as a minority category under the constitutional order.[14]

Despite this framework, Kurdish political participation has taken place through political parties operating within the Turkish parliamentary system. Over the past decades, several pro-Kurdish parties have been established. A number of these parties were subsequently dissolved by the Constitutional Court on grounds including alleged links with the PKK or threats to the territorial integrity of the state.[15]

Perhaps the most notable pro-Kurdish political party in recent years, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), was founded in 2012 and succeeded in entering the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Legal proceedings have been initiated against a number of party members and elected representatives under anti-terror legislation, raising legal questions regarding the relationship between counterterrorism measures and the protection of political rights.[16] Following increasing legal pressure on the HDP, the pro-Kurdish political movement has continued its parliamentary representation through the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party), which has emerged as its political successor in recent electoral processes.

The Turkish authorities address the PKK insurgency primarily through counterterrorism legislation and security operations carried out by military and law-enforcement bodies. Türkiye's Anti-Terror Law (Law No. 3713),[together with related provisions of the Criminal Code, provides the legal framework governing the prosecution of terrorism-related offences. These provisions have been applied in cases involving alleged membership of a terrorist organisation, dissemination of propaganda for such organisations, and other related acts.[17]

International human rights bodies have expressed concern regarding the breadth and interpretation of certain provisions of these laws, particularly where their application may affect the exercise of freedom of expression, freedom of association, and political participation.[18]

The conflict also has regional dimensions due to the presence of Kurdish populations in neighbouring states, including Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Türkiye has conducted military operations against PKK positions in northern Iraq and, in certain contexts, against Kurdish-affiliated armed groups in northern Syria. Turkish authorities have justified these operations on the basis of the right of self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.[19] Legal debate surrounding these operations concerns issues such as the sovereignty of territorial states, the requirements of necessity and proportionality in the use of force, and obligations relating to civilian protection under international law.

3.2. The 2012-2015 solution process

Between 2012 and 2015, Turkish authorities initiated a political initiative aimed at reducing hostilities and exploring the possibility of a negotiated settlement. This initiative became widely known as the "solution process" (çözüm süreci).[20]

The process began with contacts between representatives of the Turkish state and Abdullah Öcalan, who has been imprisoned since 1999. These contacts were conducted through intelligence channels and parliamentary delegations. In March 2013, a public message attributed to Öcalan called for a ceasefire and for the withdrawal of PKK fighters from Turkish territory.[21]

Following this call, a ceasefire was declared, and armed confrontations decreased significantly during 2013 and much of 2014. During this period, the Turkish government also established a "Wise Persons Committee" composed of academics, civil society

figures, and public personalities tasked with engaging communities across the country and facilitating public dialogue concerning the peace process.[22]

The negotiations were not formalised through a publicly signed agreement. Rather, the process evolved through indirect contacts and public statements. Issues reported to have been discussed included the possible disarmament and demobilisation of PKK combatants, legal and constitutional reforms, expanded cultural rights, and questions relating to local governance and political participation.[23]

In February 2015, a joint public statement commonly referred to as the "Dolmabahçe Declaration" was presented in Istanbul by representatives of the government and members of the Kurdish political movement. The declaration outlined a series of discussion points relating to democratisation and the potential disarmament of the PKK.[24]

Subsequently, disagreements emerged regarding the interpretation and status of the declaration. Political developments also affected the trajectory of the process. In June 2015, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) entered the Turkish parliament after surpassing the national electoral threshold.

In July 2015, following a series of violent incidents—including a deadly attack in the town of Suruç and subsequent killings of Turkish security personnel claimed by PKK-affiliated elements—hostilities resumed. Armed confrontations spread to several urban areas in southeastern Turkey.[25]

Security operations, as referred to by Turkish authorities, were conducted in multiple Kurdish-majority municipalities and were accompanied by curfews, destruction of property in certain districts, and displacement of residents. Legal proceedings were initiated against elected municipal officials, and state-appointed trustees replaced several local administrations.[26] The ceasefire associated with the peace process effectively ended in 2015, and the armed conflict resumed thereafter. Following the attempted coup d'état in July 2016, Türkiye declared a nationwide state of emergency that remained in force until July 2018. During this period, a series of emergency decrees were adopted which affected local governance structures, civil society organisations, and political representation, particularly in municipalities in the southeastern regions of the country.



4. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (2024-2026)

In October 2024 a new political initiative concerning the Kurdish issue in Türkiye emerged following public statements made in the Turkish Grand National Assembly by Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). In these remarks, Bahçeli indicated that a new phase aimed at ending the armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK could begin if the imprisoned Kurdish political leader Abdullah Öcalan issued a public call encouraging the organisation to end armed activities.[27] The statement was followed by public comments from representatives of the Turkish government, including President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who indicated that the possibility of ending the armed conflict could be considered if the PKK renounced armed struggle and dissolved its structure.[28] These statements marked the beginning of a new political initiative that subsequently led to a series of contacts and institutional developments.

Following these developments, the DEM Party, which represents the pro-Kurdish political movement in the Sea of Marmara.

Under authorisation from the Turkish Ministry of Justice, delegations from the DEM Party conducted a series of visits to the prison. These delegations included members of parliament such as Pervin Buldan and Sırrı Süreyya Önder, among others. Following each visit, the delegation issued public statements communicating the content of discussions with Öcalan and conveying messages attributed to him to the public and to political actors.[29] Several meetings between DEM Party representatives and Öcalan took place during late 2024 and early 2025.

On 27 February 2025, following one of these meetings at İmralı prison, a written message attributed to Abdullah Öcalan was made public by the DEM Party delegation. In this statement, Öcalan called on the PKK to convene a congress and to consider dissolving its organisational structure and ending the armed struggle against the Turkish state.[30] The message indicated that the Kurdish question should be addressed through democratic political mechanisms rather than armed confrontation.

Shortly after the publication of this message, the PKK issued a declaration announcing a ceasefire beginning on 1 March 2025. In this declaration, the organisation stated that it would follow the direction outlined in Öcalan's message and that preparations would begin for a congress at which the futute of the organization would be discussed. In the following weeks, representatives of the organization confirmed that preparations for such a congress were underway in areas of northern Iraq where the PKK maintains bases.[31]

Between 5 and 7 May 2025, the PKK held what it described as its twelfth congress.[32] Following the congress, on 12 May 2025, the organisation released a declaration stating that it had decided to dissolve its organizational structure and to end its strategy of armed struggle against the Turkish state. The declaration referred to the February 2025 message attributed to Abdullah Öcalan and stated that the decision had been adopted in response to that call In the months that followed, several developments related to the implementation of this decision were reported.

In July 2025, a group of PKK members participated in a symbolic ceremony in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq during which a number of weapons were publicly destroyed.

Later in 2025, statements attributed to the organisation indicated that its fighters were withdrawing from positions inside Turkish territory toward areas located in northern Iraq.[34]



Political contacts also took place in Ankara during this period. on 10 April 2025, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğa received DEM Party representatives Pervin Buldan and Sırrı Süreyya Önder[35] at the Presidential Complex in Ankara.[36] The meeting was attended by senior state officials, including Ibrahim Karin, head of the National Intelligence Organization. According to official statements released following the meeting, the discussion addressed the developments following the February statement and the ceasefire announced by the PKK.

Parallel to these developments, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye initiated the creation of a parliamentary commission to examine legal and political questions connected with these developments that had followed the February 2025 statement. In August 2025, the parliament established the "National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy Commission" (Milli Dayanışma, Kardeşlik ve Demokrasi Komisyonu, the Commission), composed of 51 members of parliament representing the political parties holding seats in the legislature.[37] Members were drawn from the Justice and Development Party (AKP Party), the Republican People's Party (CHP), the DEM Party, the MHP, Yeni Yol (the New Path Party), and several smaller parties represented in the parliament.

The establishment of the Commission was overseen by the Speaker of the Parliament, Numan Kurtulmuş. The Commission began its work in August 2025 and held several meetings during the following months in which members discussed institutional and legal questions related to the new dialogue.

During one of its meetings in November 2025 the Commission voted to authorize the creation of a parliamentary delegation to visit Abdullah Öcalan at İmralı prison in order to obtain information regarding the developments related to the process. The proposed delegation included members of parliament from different political parties represented in the Commission, including Hüseyin Yayman from the AKP, Feti Yıldız from the MHP, and Gülistan Kılıç Koçyiğit from DEM. The organization of such a visit required authorization and coordination with the Turkish Ministry of Justice and the prison administration responsible for İmralı Island.[38]

At the beginning of 2026, the parliamentary Commission completed a report summarising the discussions conducted during its meetings, and identifying several legal questions associated with the developments that had taken place during the previous year and proposing recommendations for the next steps. The report refers to issues including the legal framework applicable to members of armed organizations who renounce violence, questions concerning possible reintegration mechanisms, and broader legislative provisions connected to the process.[39]

The report was voted upon by the Commission on 18 February 2026, with a qualified majority: 47 votes in favour, 2 votes against, and 1 abstention.[40] The two 'no' votes were cast by the Turkish Workers' Party (TİP) and the Labour Party (EMEP), both of which publicly stated objections to elements of the report, including its framing of the conflict and the absence of what they described as sufficiently robust democratic analysis and references to core issues such as as mother-tongue rights and unsolved political crimes. A CHP member, Türkan Elçi, abstained, citing the report's omission of a dedicated section on unresolved political killings. Representatives of the AKP, MHP, DEM and other groups voted in favor of adoption, although the DEM Party formally attached an annotation (şerh) expressing reservations about the use of certain terms such as "Terörsüz Türkiye" and "terror" in the report's language, and preferring conceptualisation more in line with the official name of the committee, "National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy ", or relating to its subject matter, the Kurdish question.

The document was subsequently transmitted to the National Assembly parliament for further consideration. The legal and institutional implications of these developments are examined in greater detail in subsequent sections of this report.

During the same period, additional visits by DEM Party representatives to Abdullah Öcalan continued under the authorisation of the Turkish authorities. On 27 February 2026, one year after his initial statement, another message attributed to Öcalan was made public following a visit by DEM Party representatives to İmralı prison.[41]

In this message, Öcalan referred to the developments that had taken place during the preceding year and reiterated the call for the continuation of a transition from armed conflict to political engagement. The message called for the adoption of legal measures that would support a democratic political process and referred to the need for legislation addressing the transition from armed activity to civilian political participation. The message also referred to the importance of developing legal guarantees and institutional arrangements capable of supporting a political framework in which the Kurdish question could be addressed through democratic mechanisms. Further analysis of the legal and political implications of this statement is presented in later sections of this report.



5. INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Kurdish question in Türkiye is governed by a dense body of international human rights law, minority-rights standards, humanitarian principles, and regional European instruments that together frame the obligations of the State in both peacetime, conflict and peacebuilding contexts. It situates itself at the crossroads between fundamental freedoms, political participation, minority rights, local governance, internal displacement, counter-terrorism measures, accountability for past abuses, and the protection of civilians.

The UN Declaration on the Right to Peace (A/RES/71/189)[42] offers an important overarching normative lens, affirming that peace should be understood as a condition in which human rights are promoted and protected, and that States should build peace through equality, justice, and the rule of law. In its preamble, the Declaration acknowledges that " all measures taken in the fight against terrorism must be in compliance with the obligations of States under international law" and that "the promotion and protection of human rights for all and the rule of law are essential to the fight against terrorism, and [..] effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but are complementary and mutually reinforcing. " It is further recognised "that peace is not only the absence of conflict but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. "

In this context, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has stressed that the impact of anti-terrorism related policies must be assessed not only through the lens of security, but also through their effect on minority communities, political pluralism, and equal enjoyment of rights, as anti-terrorism legislation must not result in violations of fundamental rights. [48]

It should be noted that Türkiye made a reservation to the ICCPR, in respect of Article 27, and the CRC, in respect of Articles 17, 29 and 30, stating that they would be interpreted and applied in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey[49] and the Treaty of Lausanne[50]. In fact, Türkiye adopts a restrictive interpretation of the Treaty of Lausanne, as precluding it from recognising "minorities" other than those specified in its Article 1[51]. However, UN Human Rights bodies noted that the Treaty of Lausanne does not contain any prohibition to the recognition of other groups as minorities.[52]

At regional level, Türkiye is a member of the Council of Europe and is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights[53]. Individuals within Turkish jurisdiction therefore have the right to bring applications before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The ECtHR has issued numerous judgments concerning events arising in the context of the conflict. These judgments have addressed, inter alia, the right to life, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, freedom of expression, freedom of association, property rights, and due process guarantees.

Notable cases include Selahattin Demirtaş v. Turkey (GC, 2020)[54], in which the Court found violations related to the applicant's pre-trial detention and political rights, and in which the Grand Chamber additionally found a violation of Article 18 in conjunction with Article 5 — concluding that detention served the ulterior purpose of stifling pluralism — and invoked Article 46 to order immediate release; and Yüksekdağ v. Turkey (2022)[55], which found definitive violations of Articles 5(1), 5(3), 10, 18, and Article 3 of Protocol No. 1. Other cases brought before the Court have concerned matters such as village destruction, enforced disappearances, restrictions on political parties, prosecutions of journalists and elected officials, and limitations on political speech. The "right to hope" principle, meaning the possibility of review or conditional release for prisoners serving life sentences, was conceptualised in Vinter and Others v. United Kingdom [GC] (2013)[56]. Öcalan (No. 2) (2014)[57] and the related cases Kaytan, Gurban, Boltan) applied the Vinter principle to Turkey for the first time.

A further legal question frequently raised in academic and policy discussions concerns whether particular phases of the conflict reach the threshold of a non-international armed conflict under international humanitarian law.

The Turkish authorities generally characterise the situation as a counterterrorism matter governed by domestic law. Some legal analyses, however, suggest that the sustained armed confrontations between Turkish state forces and an organised armed group such as the PKK meet the criteria to be considered a non-international armed conflict, therefore falling within the scope of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and customary international humanitarian law.[58] Such interpretation has been supported by rulings of the ECtHR[59] and of the Brussels Court of Appeal.[60]

Where applicable, international humanitarian law rules establish minimum standards binding on all parties, including the protection of civilians, the humane treatment of detainees, and the prohibition of torture and attacks directed against non-combatants. Human rights organisations have documented allegations of violations by both Turkish security forces and the PKK, including incidents affecting civilian populations.[61]

6. FINDINGS OF THE MISSION

The Mission's work commenced shortly after the approval and public release of the National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy Commission's Report (the Report).[62] The aspirations and areas of consensus reflected in the Report therefore provide a framework for the Mission's assessment of the process to date and the next steps.

The Comission´s Report-Overview

The Report frames the process ("süreç") as a legal and political framework aimed at strengthening parliamentary oversight, binding the administration to law, and enhancing societal trust. It emphasizes that the authority, experience, and representativeness of Parliament are central safeguards against internal and external interferences[63], and that the process must include all sectors of society alongside political representatives. The report explicitly states that MPs acted on behalf of the nation, irrespective of party affiliation.

A critical threshold in the process is identified as the verified disarmament of the PKK, with the report stressing that verification processes must be objective, measurable, transparent, and auditable through coordination among relevant state institutions. Verification is framed not only as a declaration of the end of armed threat but as the starting point for implementing legal and policy measures. The report notes a general agreement among political parties on the need for legal regulations governing disarmament, dissolution, and weapon handover.

The report recommends a temporary, independent law to govern the disarmament process and its aftermath. According to the report, this law should define the post-disarmament legal status of former PKK members, facilitate their safe reintegration into society, ensure permanent rejection of violence, and prevent perceptions of impunity. The report underscores that the law should be clear, comprehensive, and sensitive to societal expectations, leaving minimal room for interpretive expansion.

In addition, the report highlights the importance of enabling former members to adapt to societal life, including measures that support public order and community integration. Economic and social programs in affected regions are identified as priorities to increase societal capacity for reintegration. The report proposes establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism within the executive branch to ensure coordination, transparency, and accountability, with regular reports submitted to Parliament.

Regarding democratization, the Report stresses the need for a secure political environment where ideas can be expressed freely and peacefully. It asserts that violence, threats, and terrorism undermine democratic deliberation. The report calls for full compliance with European Court of Human Rights and Constitutional Court of Türkiye decisions, and recommends reviewing criminal, penal, and detention laws to align with international treaties to which Türkiye is a party. Reforms should also ensure freedom of assembly, expression, and political participation, as well as enhance pluralism, transparency, and accountability in party and election law. The report stresses that societal cohesion should respect diverse views under shared democratic values.

The Report addresses local governance, advocating for *stronger democratic standards in municipal administration*. It recommends that administrative oversight powers be exercised in accordance with democratic norms, that municipal elections reflect representative participation, and that human rights institutions be strengthened to safeguard equality and fairness. Legislation amendments are recommended so that, in the event that a mayor is removed from office, the election for their replacement will be conducted solely by the municipal council. These measures are presented as essential for sustainable democratic development.

In conclusion, the Report frames lasting peace and societal integration as contingent upon the management of disarmament, reintegration, and democratization. It asserts that security measures alone are insufficient, and that democratic citizenship, equality-based fraternity, and institutional transparency are essential for sustainable peace. The Report is not binding; rather, it positions its recommendations as a structured reference for legislative and administrative action, emphasizing parliamentary oversight, legal clarity, and inclusive policy-making as foundational. The report also clarifies that its content reflects the collective deliberations and consensus of the Commission, intended to guide political and public decision-making, and does not represent external endorsement or opinion.

6.1 The Commission's Work

The Mission considers the establishment of the Commission to be a significant institutional development. It marked a shift from earlier attempts to address the Kurdish question through informal or back-channel discussions, and for the first time it created a formal space for discussion where parliamentary groups reached common ground on a framework addressing the issue under the legislature's roof.This in itself constitutes an important procedural achievement, not least because it demonstrates a measure of cross-party consensus on the need to engage the issue through institutional rather than exclusively executive-driven channels. The Commission was not expected to be a forum forresolving the Kurdish issue in its entirety. Rather, it constitutes an initial stage in what must be understood as a long-term process requiring incremental steps and sustained political engagement.

At the same time, the Mission notes that the process within the Commission remained limited in several respects. From a procedural standpoint, while it is commendable that the Commission sought to consult a broad range of societal actors - inviting non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, bar associations, and other groups to give evidence - civic participation seemed to remain limited both in scope and influence. Consultations largely took place at a late stage of the process, and views expressed were recorded without creating structured space to deliberate on the input received or consider how it might inform the Commission's work, meaning that civil society recommendations were not substantively reflected in the final report. The Mission further notes that civil society inclusion should not be understood as a completed step but rather as the beginning of a continuing process: the consultation phase alone does not ensure that the concerns raised are carried forward into implementation. In this regard, the Mission considers that a more meaningful civil society engagement would significantly strengthen the legitimacy and solidity of the process going forward.

The Mission also notes the limited representation of women within the Commission. Although women were included among the members, they remained significantly underrepresented, with 10 of the 51 Commission members being women. The fact that the drafting MPs were all male further reinforces the impression that women were not adequately represented in the formulation of the final text. This underrepresentation has substantive consequences for the Report's content: the Mission notes the absence of gender perspectives within the Report, which contains no references to women's participation in the peace process and does not address the specific needs of women affected by conflict.

The Mission considers that future stages of the process should address this gap, including through the creation of mechanisms to investigate sexual and gender-based violence, the meaningful inclusion of women in peace negotiations and reintegration programmes, and the development of social reintegration plans for women who may have participated in armed groups. A comprehensive peace process must engage with the full societal impact of the conflict.

The Mission further considers that the Commission's understanding of the conflict was shaped by the Government's framing of the process as a "Terror-free Türkiye" initiative. This approach is mirrored in the Report, which adopts a predominantly security-based lens. The repeated use of the term "terrorism," including its appearance 137 times in the report, contrasts sharply with the limited and indirect treatment of issues such as the Kurdish language, which appears only in the minutes. This was also reflected in the divergent public reception of the Report: media coverage of the vote underscored that, despite broad support for the Report's recommendations among most parties in the Commission, there were divergent analyses of its content and terminology both within and outside Parliament, reflecting differing understandings of the conflict's nature and appropriate legal framing.[63]

The Mission considers that accurately identifying the nature of a problem is a prerequisite for designing effective solutions. The Kurdish issue fundamentally involves questions of language, identity, political participation, and democratic rights, and a framework that does not engage with these dimensions risks limiting the scope of available solutions. The Mission notes that a central objective of the process should be to move the Kurdish issue from a conflict and violence framework into a political and civil one, progressing from what might be characterised as a "negative peace," understood as the cessation of armed confrontation, toward a "positive peace," involving structural reforms addressing political rights, democratic participation, cultural recognition, and social integration.

The Mission further notes that the Kurdish issue extends beyond a purely domestic dimension, carrying significant regional and international implications. Developments in neighbouring regions - particularlyin northeastern Syria and among Kurdish communities in bordering countries - mean that the outcome of the process could have wider regional consequences. In this broader context, the Mission underscores that the objective must be the construction of an enduring and "honourable peace,"

achieved through gradual but consistent steps capable of transforming the conflict from a violent confrontation into a political and civil dialogue. Moreover, while the Commission's work and the Report contain important conclusions concerning the ambitions of the process, it remains insufficiently detailed in terms of implementation. The Report sets out broad objectives, but does not provide concrete measures, timelines, or mechanisms for delivery. As such, its value lies more in articulating aspirations than in offering an operational roadmap. For the process to advance meaningfully, these ambitions will need to be translated into specific and actionable steps.

In addition, a more implicit but widely shared concern related to the perceived level of political commitment underpinning the process. While not always expressed in direct or uniform terms, several interlocutors indicated that their reservations were linked not only to the limited scope of the report but also to uncertainties regarding the extent to which the ruling majority is prepared to pursue meaningful and sustained reforms. This suggests that, alongside substantive gaps in the report, questions of trust and political will constitute an important underlying dimension shaping stakeholders' responses.

6.2 Representation

The Mission notes that the question of representation, meaning who participates in the process, in what capacity and under which conditions, is central to the credibility and effectiveness of any peace initiative. In this respect, the current process raises important considerations regarding both the role of the DEM Party and the position of Abdullah Öcalan.

The Mission recognises that the DEM Party plays a significant representative role in giving voice to the demands and interests of the Kurdish population, particularly as regards democratic reforms, cultural recognition, and the protection of fundamental rights. At the same time, the Mission considers that elements related to disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration require direct engagement with the PKK and, therefore, with its leadership. In this sense, the roles of political representation and conflict resolution, while complementary, are distinct and cannot be conflated.

The Mission noted that Mr. Öcalan's role in initiating the current phase of the process is broadly acknowledged, and that his continued relevance to its progress is widely recognised. His capacity to engage meaningfully in the process is therefore not a peripheral matter but a structural condition for its advancement.

Against this background, the Mission notes with concern that Mr. Öcalan's detention conditions at the island prison of İmralı, where he has been held for 27 years under particularly severe restrictions, are not addressed anywhere in the Commission's report. For a period of approximately ten years prior to the current process he was held in near-complete isolation, and for four years his lawyers were denied any access to him. The Mission understands that the İmralı administration retains full discretion over who may visit, under what conditions, and that basic guarantees of confidentiality are not ensured. These conditions are incompatible with the requirements of structured, meaningful negotiation.

Comparative experience from other conflict resolution processes underscores this point. The South African peace process accelerated decisively in 1990 when the government took steps toward reform, including releasing Nelson Mandela from prison, a precondition that proved indispensable to the credibility and progress of negotiations. Indeed, as Mandela himself stated when rejecting an earlier offer of conditional release: "only free men can negotiate; prisoners cannot enter into contracts".[64] The ability of a key negotiating figure to engage with full agency, to consult freely with relevant stakeholders, and to communicate under guarantees of confidentiality are essential structural conditions for any dialogue to advance meaningfully.

In this context, the Mission wishes to highlight the binding force of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, including the 2014 judgment in Öcalan v. Turkey (No. 2), and evolving international human rights standards concerning long-term detention, human dignity, and the preservation of prospects for future reintegration, a principle referred to as the "right to hope." This jurisprudence holds that life sentences must be subject to genuine review, ensuring that prisoners retain a meaningful possibility of release. The Mission notes that the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers issued a resolution in September 2024 calling on Türkiye to swiftly and effectively implement the relevant ECtHR rulings, including with specific reference to Mr. Öcalan's case.[65]

The Mission considers that, as the process develops, creating the conditions for Mr. Öcalan to engage in structured and confidential communication with relevant actors would represent an essential step forward. Such communication may, where appropriate and in accordance with applicable law, involve representatives of the Kurdish political movement, competent Turkish authorities, legal counsels, and possibly national and international actors.

The Mission recognises that this is a sensitive matter requiring careful consideration, and encourages all parties to reflect on how such conditions might be established in a manner consistent with Türkiye's legal framework and international obligations.

6.3 Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

The Mission considers that advancing an effective disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process will require the establishment of a clear legal and technical framework providing adequate guarantees to PKK members. Such frameworks typically encompass legal, security, and social guarantees working in concert, and the Mission considers all three dimensions to be necessary components of any credible and durable process in the present context.

In terms of sequencing, the creation of such a framework and clarity concerning the legal status of those who agree to demobilise must go hand in hand with the disarmament process itself. Indeed, the Mission considers this a necessary preliminary step for disarmament to take place at all. The framework will need to address the situation of PKK members across different circumstances, whether they are currently imprisoned, in the mountains, or in asylum abroad. In this regard, the Mission notes that the release of PKK members or alleged affiliates imprisoned for non-violent offences would constitute an important confidence-building measure and an early signal of good faith. A phased approach is strongly recommended throughout this process, so as to avoid the risk of stalemate that would arise from seeking unilateral concessions from any single party.

A further issue that requires explicit legal clarification is the effect of the PKK's declared dissolution in May 2025 on Turkey's domestic legal framework, in particular under Law No. 3713 on the Fight Against Terrorism and in relation to ongoing or pending prosecutions for membership and related offences. While the dissolution reportedly took place in accordance with the organization's internal decision- making procedures, its legal consequences under domestic law remain uncertain. It is not established whether the cessation of the organisation's activities has any impact on its continued designation as a terrorist organisation, nor whether it should have any bearing on the legal characterisation of past conduct or on the continuation of criminal proceedings against alleged members. This uncertainty is particularly significant in the context of a potential DDR process, as legal clarity on the status of individuals associated with the organisation is a prerequisite for predictable reintegration pathways and consistent judicial practice.

A coherent legal framework would therefore need to address whether, and under what conditions, organisational dissolution may be taken into account in prosecutorial discretion, sentencing, or review of ongoing cases, in order to ensure both legal certainty and the credibility of any broader peace and reintegration architecture.

The Mission also notes that amendments to existing legislation, particularly the Anti-Terror Law and related provisions in the penal code, may be necessary to create a viable legal framework for disarmament and reintegration. Without such legal reforms, disarmament alone would not address the broader conditions that gave rise to the conflict.

On the substance of the Commission's Report, while certain mechanisms related to disarmament verification are proposed, the broader components of a comprehensive DDR process remain underdeveloped. The Mission recommends that future stages of the process develop a detailed framework for the social reintegration of former combatants, addressing legal protection from prosecution and discrimination, access to employment, and the conditions for community acceptance. Ensuring these elements will be essential to translating disarmament into the long-term stability that the process ultimately seeks to achieve.

The Mission further considers that a key role could be played by third parties and international organisations, contributing technical expertise to the operationalisation of the DDR process. In its current design, these functions would fall primarily to the Turkish military and intelligence services, an arrangement that the Mission considers unlikely to foster the trust between parties that a successful DDR process requires. The involvement of neutral international actors should therefore be taken into consideration as the process advances.

Finally, the Mission underscores that the DDR process must be carried out in a manner consistent with the principles of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace, and security. This means ensuring the meaningful participation of women at all stages of the process, addressing their specific protection needs as well as those of children, and reinforcing the role of women in promoting sustainable and inclusive peace. These are not supplementary considerations but integral components of any DDR framework that aspires to be comprehensive and durable.

6.4 Democratisation

The Mission considers that the DDR process cannot be pursued in isolation; it must unfold in parallel with a broader process of democratisation aimed at strengthening public confidence in the rule of law. In this respect, the Commission's report itself acknowledges this connection, which the Mission welcomes as an important recognition.

A particularly significant element in this regard is the commitment to ensuring the execution of judgments of the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights. The Mission underscores that compliance with these rulings is a binding legal obligation but also carries value from a conflict resolution perspective, serving as a confidence-building measure that, in some cases, would not require new legislation.

Certain judgments were frequently raised during the Mission's meetings as illustrative of matters directly relevant to the dialogue process, including *Selahattin Demirtaş v. Turkey* (No. 2), concerning prolonged pre-trial detention and political pluralism, and *Kavala v. Turkey*, relating to findings of unlawful detention and the requirement of compliance with the Court's final judgment. The Mission notes that the persistent failure to implement these rulings has contributed to legal uncertainty and weakened trust in institutional mechanisms. Ensuring the effective implementation of judicial decisions is an essential component of restoring confidence in the legal system.

The Mission also notes a broad consensus among the actors it met that legal amendments will be necessary for the process to consolidate, particularly, though not exclusively, in the sphere of criminal and anti-terrorism legislation, as highlighted by numerous international human rights organisations. At the same time, the Mission wishes to emphasise that significant progress need not await legislative reform alone. Administrative acts and decrees can have an immediate and meaningful impact. In this respect, for instance, the removal of elected pro-Kurdish mayors from numerous municipalities and their replacement with state-appointed trustees has been a significant source of grievance; their reinstatement would represent an important confidence-building step for the Kurdish population and a concrete signal of the government's commitment to the process.

The mission further notes that several stakeholders identified the absence of transitional justice mechanisms as a gap that the process has yet to address. Truth-seeking initiatives, reconciliation

processes and accountability for past human rights violations remain outstanding issues. In particular, the demands of victims' groups, including the "Saturday Mothers," who continue to call for clarity regarding enforced disappearances, speak to the need for the process to engage with the legacy of past abuses. Addressing these legal issues would not only strengthen the rule of law but also create the deeper conditions necessary for long-term reconciliation.

6.5. Political, Cultural and Linguistic Rights

The Mission notes the absence of references to political, cultural, and linguistic rights in the Commission's Report, and considers this a significant gap given the centrality of these issues to a comprehensive resolution. The Kurdish issue is, at its core, rooted in questions of identity, language, and political recognition; any peace process that does not engage seriously with these dimensions risks addressing symptoms rather than causes.

On local governance, the Mission reiterates its earlier observations concerning the removal of elected mayors and their replacement with state-appointed trustees. Stakeholders consistently identified this as an issue with significant implications for democratic representation and public confidence in local governance. The restoration of elected municipal representatives could play an important role in facilitating dialogue and building trust within affected communities. However, the Mission notes that the report does not address this matter in any detail.

Looking ahead, the Mission considers that progress on cultural and linguistic rights need not await constitutional reform. A range of administrative and policy measures could be pursued in the interim, including, among others, the public funding of Kurdish language education at third level, the inclusion of Kurdish language productions in Ministry of Culture screenings, the addition of Kurdish to public announcements in settings such as transport and healthcare, and the broader use of Kurdish in administrative and health contexts as a means of ensuring more equitable access to public services. Such steps would carry both practical and symbolic significance and could contribute meaningfully to building trust within affected communities.



6.6. Regional Dimension

The mission underscores the need to take due account of the situation of Kurdish populations across neighboring countries, notably in Syria, including the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (Rojava). In this regard, it noted that the political, security, and humanitarian conditions prevailing in these areas continue to have a direct bearing on developments in Turkey. While acknowledging the importance of broader regional stabilization, the mission emphasizes that ongoing challenges in these contexts remain intrinsically linked to the prospects for progress, and should therefore be duly considered within any forward-looking assessment of the process and its wider regional dynamics.



7.CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mission considers this process to represent a genuine and important opportunity, both for the resolution of a long-standing conflict and for a broader process of democratisation and human rights protection in Türkiye, with positive potential implications for the wider region. For this potential to be realised, the process will need to be pursued with transparency, inclusivity, and genuine sustained political commitment. The observations offered in this report, spanning questions of representation, DDR, democratisation, and the recognition of political, cultural, and linguistic rights, are intended as a constructive contribution to stakeholders' reflections on a process that is inherently complex and where the careful balancing of competing rights and interests is unavoidable.

On the role of the international community, the Mission recognises that Türkiye has indicated a preference for conducting this process as an internal matter, without the involvement of third parties as mediators or conveners. The Mission respects this position while nonetheless considering that meaningful space exists for constructive international engagement. Such engagement could take a range of forms, including the provision of technical expertise in support of DDR operationalisation, assistance with legal and policy reform, support for compliance with international human rights obligations, and contributions to the effective implementation of ECtHR judgments. International actors could also, where appropriate and if acceptable to the parties, offer their services as guarantors of agreed frameworks. The Mission encourages all relevant actors to remain open to such forms of engagement, in the understanding that international experience and expertise can strengthen rather than substitute for domestic ownership of the process.

The following recommendations are therefore offered in a constructive and forward-looking spirit, with a view to supporting ongoing efforts toward a peaceful, democratic, and sustainable resolution of the issues discussed. They build on exchanges with a wide range of interlocutors and reflect comparative international experience, relevant legal standards, and the importance of fostering mutual trust among all stakeholders.

While mindful of the complexity and sensitivity of the context, these recommendations are intended as practical avenues for consideration, which could contribute to strengthening the rule of law, enhancing democratic governance, and creating enabling conditions for dialogue and long-term stability. Their implementation may be understood as a gradual and mutually reinforcing process, adaptable to evolving circumstances and undertaken in accordance with Türkiye's constitutional and legal framework.



1.PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

a) Further steps could be taken to establish formal consultation mechanisms between government institutions and civil society organizations.

b) Particular attention is encouraged to ensuring that participation is accessible and inclusive, including through the provision of adequate language and interpretation services.

c) The regular publication of progress reports regarding the peace process and legislative reforms may contribute to transparency, accountability, and public trust in the process.

2.REPRESENTATION

There appears to be broad recognition of the important role of Mr. Öcalan in initiating the current phase of the process, and his continued relevance remains significant, as reflected in his recent message of 27 February 2026.

a) If dialogue is to advance in a constructive and structured manner consideration could be given to his detention conditions being within a transparent and clearly defined legal framework, so as to enable structured, confidential, and lawful communication with relevant actors. Such communication may, where appropriate and in accordance with applicable law, involve representatives of the Kurdish political movement, competent Turkish authorities, and, where relevant, other national and international interlocutors.

b) In this context, attention may also be drawn to the binding force of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, including the 2014 Öcalan v. Turkey (2) decision, as well as the evolving interpretation of international human rights standards concerning long-term detention, human dignity, and the preservation of prospects for reintegration, often referred to as the "right to hope."

3. A COMPREHENSIVE DDR FRAMEWORK

Consider the adoption of a comprehensive legal framework for DDR. This should include the adoption of a temporary and clearly defined legal framework regulating the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former members of armed organizations. Such a framework could be preceded by, and grounded in, a structured process of direct engagement and negotiation among the parties to the conflict, recognizing that sustainable DDR processes require political agreement and mutual confidence.

a) *Legal guarantees may accompany or precede disarmament measures to provide certainty regarding the legal status of participants. In this regard, advancing an effective DDR process would benefit from the prior establishment of a clear legal and technical framework ensuring that reintegration takes place under appropriate legal and security guarantees. International experience suggests that carefully designed legal arrangements, combined where appropriate with third-party technical expertise and confidence-building measures, can contribute significantly to building trust between the parties and within society at large.*

b) *Such a framework could include an independent disarmament verification mechanism. Verification should be objective, transparent, and auditable, involving relevant state institutions and international, independent observers where appropriate.*

c) In parallel, consideration could be given to the use of existing executive and administrative instruments to enable timely and flexible confidence-building steps without necessarily requiring comprehensive legislative reform. For example, administrative acts could facilitate the return of individuals who left the country to avoid prosecution, by lifting existing entry bans where appropriate. Similarly, the use of decree-based mechanisms—drawing on precedents from past emergency governance practices—could allow for the adoption of targeted measures addressing specific legal or procedural obstacles to reintegration. Exploring such avenues in a systematic manner could provide additional practical tools to support early progress and build momentum in the process.

4. STRENGTHEN COMPLIANCE WITH JUDICIAL DECISIONS

Consider further measures to ensure the effective enforcement of judgements from the European Court of Human Rights and the Constitutional Court of Türkiye. Particular emphasis should be placed on the timely and good-faith execution of final judicial decisions, inline with obligations arising under Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights and within the existing constitutional and legal framework. In this regard, attention should be drawn, among others, to ECtHR judgments such as Selahattin Demirtaş v. Turkey, Kavala v. Turkey, Öcalan v. Turkey (2) and Constitutional Court decisions such as like Şerafettin Can Atalay (3) [Plenary], App. No: 2023/99744.[66]



5. EXPAND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

a) Consider reviewing political party legislation, to ensure that party closure procedures meet strict democratic standards and are applied only in exceptional circumstances.

b) Further steps could be explored to strengthen local democratic governance by ensuring that municipal administrations operate according to democratic standards and representative legitimacy.

c) In this context, measures related to restore the authority of elected municipal representatives removed under the "trusteeship system" as a step towards facilitating dialogue and building trust within affected communities, may merit reflection.

d) Consider safeguards to ensure the rights of elected representatives and political actors to participate in democratic processes without undue criminalization, including through possible review of relevant criminal and anti-terrorism legislation to ensure alignment with international human rights standards.

e) *Amend legislation governing demonstrations and public gatherings to ensure compliance with international standards.*



6. LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

a) Consider further developing policies acknowledging the linguistic and cultural diversity of Turkey's population.

b) In particular, additional legal and policy frameworks could be explored to support mother tongue rights and the use of Kurdish and other languages in education, cultural activities, and local public services

c) *Such measures should be grounded in an inclusive and pluralistic understanding of citizenship--one that fully recognises and accommodates the Kurdish identity, alongside other cultural identities, as an integral part of the democratic fabric of the state.*

7. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION:

a) *Consistent with the principles of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 efforts could be made to ensure meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations, political dialogue, and reintegration programs.*

b) *Consider strengthening mechanisms to investigate and address sexual and gender-based violence related to the conflict.*

8. TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Consider exploring transitional justice mechanisms, including the possible establishment of an independent body to investigate unresolved cases. In this regard, the creation—by law—of an independent, adequately resourced, and internationally supported Truth, Justice and Accountability Commission should be considered, with a clear mandate to investigate, document, and publicly report on serious human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict. Its scope should explicitly include:

- *Enforced disappearances and cases of missing persons;*
- *Political killings and alleged extrajudicial executions;*
- *Torture, ill-treatment, and other grave human rights violations;*

To ensure effectiveness and public legitimacy, such a mechanism should be endowed with:

- *Powers to access official archives, summon witnesses, and ensure protection of victims and testimonies;*
- *A victim-centred approach guaranteeing meaningful participation, recognition, and the right to truth;*
- *The capacity to make binding or strongly authoritative recommendations on reparations, institutional reform, and where appropriate, referral for prosecution;*
- *This framework should be complemented by:*
- *A comprehensive reparations programme (including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, and symbolic measures);*
- *Targeted institutional reforms in the security and judicial sectors aimed at ensuring accountability and non-repetition;*
- *Mechanisms for periodic review and international accompaniment to reinforce credibility and trust.*

Anchoring these measures in law and linking them explicitly to the broader DDR process would signal a clear commitment to accountability, reconciliation, and the reconstruction of a shared and inclusive civic order.



FINAL REMARKS

The Mission wishes to underline that the above recommendations are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and that progress in one area may contribute positively to developments in others. Their potential impact lies not only in their individual implementation, but also in their capacity to contribute to a broader environment of trust, legal certainty, and democratic resilience.

It is recognized that the pace, sequencing, and modalities of any reforms remain a matter for the relevant national authorities and stakeholders. In this regard, a gradual, inclusive, and good-faith approach, grounded in dialogue and respect for the rule of law, may provide the most sustainable pathway forward.

The Mission remains confident that continued engagement, supported where appropriate by international experience and standards, can contribute to advancing a peaceful and durable resolution process.

ANNEX: MARCH-SEPTEMBER OVERVIEW

Preface

When the Independent Legal Mission on the Peace Process in Türkiye published its Post-Mission Report in May 2026, the process stood at a critical yet uncertain stage. The Mission considered the emerging dialogue to represent a genuine and important opportunity: not only to bring an end to a conflict that has shaped the lives of successive generations, but also to open space for a broader strengthening of democracy, the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights in Türkiye.

Since the publication of that report, the process has continued to evolve at considerable speed. Political dialogue has been accompanied by concrete legislative and institutional developments, most notably the adoption in August 2026 of the Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration and the subsequent establishment of mechanisms relating to its implementation. At the same time, important questions identified in the Mission's original report remain unresolved, while new political, legal and regional developments have emerged.

For this reason, the Mission considered it necessary to accompany its original report with the present briefing. The briefing does not replace, revise or supersede the findings and recommendations of the May 2026 report. Rather, it should be read alongside it. Its purpose is to record significant developments that have taken place since the report was finalised, to assess their relevance to the issues previously identified by the Mission, and to contribute to continued reflection on the conditions necessary for a credible and sustainable peace process.

The passage from armed conflict to democratic politics is rarely a single event. It is a process that depends upon legal certainty, reciprocal confidence, meaningful political participation and institutions capable of sustaining dialogue through periods of difficulty and disagreement. Developments since May demonstrate both the possibilities created by the present process and the fragility of those possibilities. Legislative measures concerning disarmament and reintegration may constitute an important step, but lasting peace cannot be reduced to the technical management of disarmament alone. As the Mission stressed in its original report, questions of democratic participation, fundamental rights, political and cultural inclusion, compliance with binding judicial decisions, and the conditions necessary for meaningful dialogue remain closely interconnected.

The Mission therefore believes that the possibility of peace should be approached with a sense of both opportunity and responsibility. The cost of unresolved conflict is borne first and foremost by the societies directly affected by it. Yet the significance of a durable settlement extends beyond Türkiye itself. Developments concerning the Kurdish question intersect with broader regional dynamics and have consequences for stability, democratic participation and human rights across the region. The Mission's original assessment already underlined this regional dimension.

This also gives the international community a responsibility. Respect for the domestic ownership of the process does not require international indifference. Nor should international engagement seek to prescribe the political outcome of negotiations or substitute itself for the actors directly concerned. Its proper role is to help protect the conditions in which a peaceful and democratic solution can develop: through consistent support for international human-rights standards, implementation of binding judgments, technical and legal expertise where useful, and the sharing of comparative experience in conflict resolution, disarmament, reintegration and confidence-building. Where requested and accepted by the relevant actors, international institutions and other independent actors may also contribute to verification, accompaniment and the strengthening of trust. This reflects the approach adopted in the Mission's May report, which sought to combine respect for domestic ownership with openness to constructive international engagement.

At moments such as this, international human-rights commitments should not be treated as external to the pursuit of peace. They are among the safeguards capable of making peace durable. A process grounded in the rule of law, democratic participation, human dignity and equality is more likely to command public confidence and to withstand future political pressures.
The Mission accordingly presents this updated briefing in the same spirit in which its original report was prepared: independently, constructively and with the conviction that the present opportunity should be taken seriously. Peace remains possible, but its sustainability will depend upon whether the political opening is accompanied by the legal guarantees, democratic reforms, reciprocal steps and sustained commitment necessary to transform an opportunity into a durable settlement.

1. **Follow-up to the Commission Report**

Following the parliamentary report of the Commission for National Solidarity, Brotherhood and Democracy, key actors across the political spectrum stressed the need for concrete legislative and administrative reforms to implement its recommendations. Delays attributed to regional and domestic developments, together with differing views over the scope and content of the necessary measures, increasingly led to assessments that the process was losing momentum.

At the end of March, the DEM Party İmralı Delegation met with Abdullah Öcalan and assessed that "any path to a solution is multilayered" and should be approached as a multidimensional issue involving negotiation, democratic will, and historical responsibility.[67] The delegation stressed that, following the Commission's report, it was vital to move without delay toward an inclusive and comprehensive legal framework for the next stage of the process. Subsequent accounts described a prospective roadmap involving the preparation of a draft law by mid-April, consultations with Öcalan and representatives of the Kurdish movement, and the adoption of key legislative measures by the end of April.[68]

Yet none of these steps materialized. Throughout April, no concrete legislative initiative was introduced, nor was the DEM Party Imrali Delegation granted permission to visit Mr. Öcalan. DEM co-chair Tülay Hatimoğulları publicly criticized the government's handling of the process, arguing that Ankara was acting hesitantly despite the momentum generated by Öcalan's 2025 call and the February parliamentary commission's report.[69] Turkish President Erdogan responded that the process was proceeding in a "positive atmosphere" and rejected claims that the process had stalled.[70]

These concerns were publicly articulated by Murat Karayılan, member of the People's Defense Center Command, on 3 May, who described the process as "frozen" and argued that no meaningful legal measures had been taken by the government.[71] On the 5th of May, on the one year anniversary of the PKK's dissolution congress, the senior representatives of the Kurdish Movement held a press conference in which they called for legal measures to be taken without further delay and for Öcalan's status to be clarified.[72] The statement expressed that although the Kurdish movement had taken many steps over the past year and demonstrated clear commitments in favour of a peaceful and democratic solution, no significant progress had been made and no meaningful reciprocal steps had been taken by the authorities.[73]

The same day also saw important proposals concerning the institutionalisation of the process. MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli proposed the creation of a Coordination Office for the Peace Process and Politicisation, including an official coordinating role for Abdullah Öcalan.[76] DEM Party Co-Chair Tuncer Bakırhan, meanwhile, proposed establishing a "Peace Monitoring and Follow-up Council" within the Turkish Grand National Assembly.[77] He argued that such a body could monitor and facilitate the process, bring together representatives of the parliamentary parties, and help accelerate the steps required to advance it. Bakırhan also stressed the need for a defined legal framework and appropriate communication conditions for Öcalan to participate in the process.

On 18 May, Bahçeli elaborated on his proposal in an interview published by Türkgün, presenting a more detailed institutional framework for the next stage of the process.[78] The proposal envisaged a defined coordinating role for Öcalan in relation to the PKK's dissolution and the broader process of disarmament and political integration. This proposal appeared to envisage a more narrowly defined role for Öcalan, focused primarily on the PKK's dissolution, disarmament and political integration, than had been contemplated in earlier discussions. It did not address broader questions concerning political representation or the cultural and political rights of the Kurdish population. Some actors also expressed concern that the proposal differed substantially from the broader framework reportedly discussed at the end of March between government representatives, the DEM Party İmralı Delegation and Mr Öcalan.[79] Concerns were also raised that the continued predominance of a counter-terrorism framework risks reducing the process to a security issue rather than addressing its democratic and political dimensions.[80]

Regional and domestic developments also complicated the process. The US-Israel War on Iran, together with continued uncertainty over the integration of the predominantly Kurdish northeast of Syria with Syria's interim authorities, contributed to a more difficult regional environment. The Turkish state has frequently treated Kurdish regions in neighbouring states as a security threat, and connected it to the process in Türkiye-in some cases informing negotiations on a domestic level. Conversely, it also has articulated its goals for the process in Türkiye of a "terror-free Türkiye" with regional aspirations ("terror-free region").[81] The DEM party, and Kurdish movements and organisations in Türkiye, as well as Kurdish actors throughout the region, have argued that lasting peace and genuine democratisation in Türkiye

through the political resolution of the Kurdish question would contribute to stability and democratisation in the broader region.[82] Put together, this indicates both a common understanding of the regional significance of the peace process, both in strategic decision making processes and steps taken domestically, as well as in the potential impact of the process.

The domestic political environment was further affected by the judicial intervention in the leadership of the Republican People's Party (CHP). On 21 May, an appeals court annulled the CHP's 2023 congress, removing party leader Özgür Özel and reinstating former chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu.[83] Shortly thereafter, Turkish police raided CHP headquarters in Ankara after a multi-day standoff by supporters loyal to Özgür Özel.[84] The ensuing internal and legal conflict weakened the opposition's ability to act collectively during a period in which the peace process was also facing significant political uncertainty.

In the following months, the dispute ultimately contributed to a major realignment within the CHP. Özel announced plans to establish a new party on 21 July, and on 24 July he formally signed the founding documents of the Yeni Parti and resigned from the CHP. Ninety-one CHP members of parliament joined the party's founding body. These developments further reshaped the parliamentary opposition and diverted political attention toward the reorganisation of the opposition.

Considered together, these developments created a more fragmented political environment around the peace process. The combination of democratic backsliding and sustained human rights violations, internal opposition conflict, regional instability, and disagreement over the legal and institutional parameters of the process reduced the political space available for sustained diverse multi-sectoral engagement with the process.

2. Breakthrough: Framework Law

An important development occurred on 24 May, when the DEM Party İmralı Delegation was once again permitted to visit Abdullah Öcalan. Following the meeting, the delegation emphasized that the next phase of the process required a comprehensive legal framework to facilitate democratic transformation. Four days later, delegation member Pervin Buldan announced that a draft framework law—expected to consist of seven or eight articles—was being prepared as part of the Peace and Democratic Society Process and would be presented to Öcalan for his views before being finalized.[85]

In June, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğa confirmed that the government was preparing legislation to accelerate the PKK's disbandment, stating that the legal framework would be submitted to parliament "without too much delay."[86] He also linked the domestic peace process to regional developments, arguing that progress toward integrating Syrian Kurdish forces into Syria's state institutions formed part of the broader objective of creating both a "terror-free Türkiye" and a "terror-free region."[87]

By July, discussion had shifted substantially from whether there would be legislation to what the legislation would contain. The Democratic Progress Institute reported that preparations focused heavily on disarmament, demobilisation, return and reintegration (DDR), while contentious political questions were largely being deferred. [88]

During the drafting process, it was widely discussed that both Abdullah Öcalan and the İmralı Delegation should be able to review and provide feedback on the bill before its submission to parliament.[89] Meetings were held at high levels to discuss the contents of the bill, however the final draft was only shared with the DEM Party shortly prior to its introduction to the parliament. Neither Abdullah Öcalan nor the Kurdish movement had seen the document.

Between 3 and 5 August, the governing AK Party-MHP alliance introduced the Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration to the Turkish Grand National Assembly.[90] On the 8th of August the Parliamentary Justice Commission approved the bill, and on the 10th of August with 467 votes in favor, 87 against and 7 abstentions.[91] On the 18th of August, the law was published in the Official Gazette, and thus brought into force.[92]

What does the law contain?

The law provides mechanisms for the reintegration of qualifying former PKK members and suspension/postponement of certain proceedings or sentences, subject to its conditions. It thus corresponds most closely to article 6 of the Commission's recommendation, while not engaging with questions of democratisation.

1. Basic Conditions and Application

The law becomes operational only after security institutions determine that the organisation has disarmed and dissolved itself.

This determination must be published in the Official Gazette as a decision of the National Security Council (MGK).Eligible individuals must submit a written application to the relevant Chief Public Prosecutor's Office or designated institution within six months of publication of the relevant MGK decision. Intentional homicide committed within the scope of the organisation's activities is excluded, as well as crimes committed before 1 June 2005 that carry life imprisonment or aggravated life imprisonment are also excluded from the postponement provisions. This 'categorisation' of individuals is significant in that by excluding all those charged prior to 2005, the law effectively excludes much of the senior leadership of the organisation as well as Abdullah Öcalan and allows for individual, rather than collective, demobilisation and disarmament.

2. Postponement of Trials and Sentences

The legislation provides for suspension of covered investigations, trials, and execution of finalized sentences. During the postponement period, courts may lift protective measures such as pre-trial detention and judicial-control measures. Reversal decisions may also be issued for files under appellate review.

The duration depends on the severity of the sentence:[93]

Category	Postponement period	Outcome if conditions are fulfilled
Sentences of 15 years or less	5 years	Ongoing cases are dropped; finalized sentences deemed fully executed
Sentences above 15 years or life imprisonment	10 years	Ongoing cases are dropped; finalized sentences deemed fully executed

If individuals are convicted on similar charges during the postponement period, the postponement decisions are revoked. Proceedings and sentence execution then resume from the point at which they were suspended.[94]

3. Monitoring, Coordination, and Implementation[95]

Monitoring, coordination, and implementation will be principally carried out by 2 bodies: (1) a board consisting of the Vice President of the Republic as Chair, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of National Defense, the Secretary General of the Presidency, the Director of the National Intelligence Organization, and the Secretary General of the National Security Council, and (2) a Parliamentary Commission established by the Presidency of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, tasked with monitor activities within the scope of this Law and issuing recommendations. The Board can elect to create subcommittees, which can include the participation of representatives of ministries, public institutions, [civil society] organisations and other persons deemed necessary.

Political Reactions

Political reactions reflect broad but qualified parliamentary support. The AK Party, MHP and DEM Party have welcomed the legislation, while the CHP,[96] Yeni Yol, and the Yeni Party have backed the process but called for greater transparency, stronger parliamentary oversight and broader democratic reforms.[97] Although the New Party did not co-sign the bill, its leader, Özgür Özel, stated that the party's support for the peace process remained unchanged and that its decision reflected concerns over the way the bill had been prepared and submitted rather than opposition to the process itself. The İYİ Party continues to oppose the legislation, while the New Welfare Party has reiterated its call for a public referendum. Meanwhile, both TİP and EMEP have welcomed efforts to end the conflict but argue that implementation should be accompanied by wider democratisation measures.

The Kurdish movement took a more critical stance, understanding the framework of disarmament as insufficient on its own and insisting on democratisation as the fundamental condition necessary for the resolution of the Kurdish question. The process, it argues, should not be defined through the language of terrorism or reduced to the technical issue of laying down arms. While recognising the law as an important first step, Öcalan stated that if "the counterpart of peace is laying down arms, the counterpart of politicization is democratic politics and a democratic society", emphasizing the need for democratisation.[98] Movement leadership further highlighted how expected steps—including the release of

certain detainees and implementation of Constitutional Court and European Court of Human Rights judgments—were not taken, creating public distrust and raising doubts about the government's commitment to the process. In a statement published on 2 September, Mustafa Karasu, notes that the CHP, Yeni Parti, and DEM Party all argued during parliamentary debates that the process must include democratization alongside security measures. He further criticizes the "categorisation" imposed by the law, which allows only a limited number of PKK members to return while excluding leaders and hundreds of others, arguing that such categorisation would undermine a comprehensive resolution.[99]

3. From Law to Practice: Next Steps

On 24 August, the Monitoring and Evaluation Board, chaired by Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz, held its inaugural meeting and agreed to establish four specialised subcommittees to coordinate implementation of the peace process.[100] The Board also began developing the institutional mechanisms for monitoring disarmament, returns, legal reform, and social reintegration.

The verification phase was expected to be completed within approximately two months, after which the National Security Council (MGK) would assess the findings before the law's substantive provisions could be fully implemented.[101] In parallel, discussions continued over the creation of a joint verification mechanism involving the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) under the auspices of the Iraqi authorities. Under this proposal, weapons would be given to the joint mechanism rather than directly to Turkish authorities, while Turkish security institutions would document the process for verification purposes.

Statements by senior officials indicated that the process was expected to move beyond disarmament toward returns and reintegration. Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz announced that the next phase would increasingly become a matter for the judiciary and legal institutions, once the laying down of weapons and dissolution had been verified.[102] Similarly, following the enactment of the law, Abdullah Öcalan emphasized on 14 September that the priority was now the implementation of reciprocal practical steps and the active functioning of the newly established oversight bodies.[103]

At the same time, concerns persisted over continuing restrictions on democratic space and broader human rights violations, contributing to the political isolation of the Kurdish society and weakening potential domestic support for the process.

On September 15, 2026, the DEM Party criticized the government's crackdown on LGBTQ people and organizations, arguing that pursuing peace and democratic society while simultaneously restricting fundamental freedoms was inconsistent and risked undermining public confidence in the process. [104]

On the 17th of September, Presidential Advisor Mehmet Uçum stated Öcalan be given a role in the Disarmament and Strategic Coordination Subcommittee, tasked with overseeing the disarmament and returns process. Crucially, Uçum explicitly said this did not mean Öcalan would be released.[105]

On 18 September, Cemil Bayık, Co-Chair of the KCK Executive Council, stated that the organisation would neither lay down its arms nor return to Türkiye unless Abdullah Öcalan was physically freed. He further argued that a sustainable peace required additional legal reforms and guarantees enabling former PKK members to participate in democratic political life.[106] The law passed by the TBMM, he stated, did not meet the demands of the Kurdish Movement.

Bayık's statement outlines most clearly the position of the Kurdish movement in the current stage. He affirmed the position that the movement had designated Abdullah Öcalan to lead the process on behalf of the movement, tasked with communicating with and managing relations with the state. The movement has taken the strategic decision to pursue democratic politics in the place of armed struggle however guarantees are needed, including legislative and constitutional change for democratisation and the recognition of Kurdish rights, he argues. Bayık further discussed the regional impact of the process as it related to Kurdish regions in Iraq, Iran and Syria. Regarding developments in Iraqi Kurdistan, he proposes that a "historic opportunity has arisen for Kurdish unity", indicating the readiness of the Movement to engage with all actors in strengthening inter-Kurdish regional relations.[107]

Ongoing regional dimensions of the process

By late August and September, the regional dimension of the peace process had become increasingly prominent in the way it was framed by both Ankara and the Kurdish movement. While the Turkish government increasingly presented the initiative as part of a broader strategy for creating a "terror-free region," Öcalan and Kurdish political actors argued that developments in Syria and the wider Middle East were inseparable from the prospects for a durable political settlement in Türkiye.

On 26 August, the Turkish government welcomed the announcement that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) would dissolve and integrate into Syria's state military institutions. Ankara explicitly linked this development to its broader objective of establishing both a "terror-free Türkiye" and a "terror-free region," reiterating its longstanding position that Kurdish armed structures in northern Syria should be incorporated into the Syrian state rather than remain autonomous.[108]

On 8 September, Speaker of Parliament Numan Kurtulmuş similarly argued that the Terror-Free Türkiye initiative should produce wider regional consequences, expressing the hope that it would contribute to reducing the role of armed groups across the region, including in Iraq.[109]

Following the DEM Party İmralı Delegation's meeting with Abdullah Öcalan on 13 September, a statement released on 14 September emphasized that the enactment of the new law marked the beginning rather than the conclusion of the process. Öcalan argued that reciprocal practical steps, the effective functioning of the newly established oversight bodies, and continued legal and political guarantees were now essential. He also situated the Turkish peace process within the broader regional context, linking its success to developments in Rojava (North and East Syria) and the wider Middle East.[110]

4. International Response to the Process

Öcalan's 27 February 2025 Call for Peace and Democratic Society, as well as the following announcement of the PKK's 12 Congress on the dissolution of the organisation, were met with widespread statements of support from national governments, international institutions and leading public figures.[111] United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed Abdullah Öcalan's February 2025 call for the PKK to lay down its arms and dissolve itself, describing the historic declaration as an "extremely important event" and a "glimmer of hope" for resolving the long-standing conflict.[112] Germany's Federal Foreign Office welcomed Öcalan's call, stating that it created a "historic opportunity" to break the cycle of violence. It added that further steps toward a viable solution should include respecting and guaranteeing the cultural and democratic rights of Kurds in Türkiye, and said the Turkish parliament had a key role in the political process—and that it was ready to support the process.[113]

The spokesman for the European Commission for Foreign Affairs, Anouar El Anouni, called for "the start of a credible peace process

aiming at a political solution to the Kurdish issue" and urged "all parties to seize the moment and start an inclusive process based on dialogue and reconciliation."[114]

In the months following Öcalan's February 2025 call, the Kurdish issue and the emerging peace process received periodic attention in European parliamentary debates and institutional reports. The European Parliament[115] and Council of Europe[116] welcomed developments toward a peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question, while simultaneously expressing concern over democratic backsliding, restrictions on fundamental rights, and the treatment of opposition figures in Türkiye. The Council of Europe's human-rights institutions likewise stressed that the process should be used to advance democratic reforms and strengthen human-rights protections.[117]

Overall, the Council of Europe has adopted a cautious institutional approach to the peace process. While the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) has consistently criticized Türkiye over human rights violations, democratic backsliding, and the erosion of the rule of law, the Committee of Ministers and the Presidency have been more restrained in their public engagement and have taken few significant political initiatives in support of the process.

This caution or inaction is particularly evident in relation to longstanding structural issues, including the non-implementation of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments, the prosecution and removal of elected mayors through the trustee (kayyum) system, and broader restrictions on democratic participation. These issues are especially significant because they intersect directly with the cases of Öcalan and other key figures in the process, specifically with regards to ECtHR's jurisprudence on reviewability/reducibility of life sentences and the principle commonly referred to as the "right to hope".[118]

Support for the peace process has been advocated for by civil society organisations and public figures including the EU Türkiye Civic Forum, Kurdish civil society organisations, political parties, social movements, trade unions, Nobel Laureates, lawyers, academics, artists, and women's organisation, and youth movements.[119] Specific peacebuilding work has been undertaken by the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI)[120] and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), while an Independent Legal Monitoring Mission on the Peace Process in Türkiye was organised in February 2026 by ELDH and MAF-DAD with the participation of lawyers from, IBARHI, UCPI, and Esculca.[121]

5. Conclusion and key considerations

The developments that followed the publication of the parliamentary commission's report suggest that the process in Türkiye represents a genuine opportunity both to resolve a decades-long conflict and to advance a broader agenda of democratization, human rights, and the rule of law. While significant progress has been made in establishing a legal and institutional framework, the period from March to September also demonstrates that the sustainability of the process depends on reciprocal political steps, transparent implementation, and continued public confidence. Regional developments, domestic political polarization, and unresolved human rights concerns continue to shape both its pace and its prospects. These dynamics indicate that there remains meaningful space for constructive international engagement in support or accompaniment of a peaceful, democratic, and sustainable resolution.

Key takeaways

- The regional dimension requires sustained attention. The process is increasingly framed by both Ankara and Kurdish political actors as part of a wider regional transformation, particularly in relation to Syria and Iraq, making regional dynamics inseparable from developments within Türkiye.

- The absence of an independent third-party mechanism increases the process's vulnerability. Although domestic institutions have assumed central responsibility for implementation, the lack of an agreed international monitoring or facilitation mechanism may reduce confidence, transparency, and resilience during periods of political tension.

- Democratic space remains a critical factor. Continuing concerns over restrictions on opposition parties, elected representatives, civil society, and minority communities risk undermining public confidence and weakening the broad societal support necessary for a durable peace.

- Abdullah Öcalan's legal status and negotiating role remain unresolved. Despite the establishment of new institutional mechanisms and renewed contact through the İmralı Delegation, the scope of Öcalan's participation, his legal status, and the conditions under which he can engage in the process remain ambiguous, limiting the development of a balanced and credible negotiating framework.

- Democratization and legal reform are integral to the peace process. Parliamentary debates, statements by Kurdish political actors, and international human rights bodies consistently indicate that disarmament alone is insufficient. Progress will also depend on implementing ECtHR judgments, strengthening judicial independence, expanding democratic participation, and addressing longstanding rule-of-law concerns.

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