



The honourable Ümit Yalçın
Turkish Ambassador to the United Kingdom
Embassy of Turkey
43 Belgrave Square
London
SW1X 9PA

By email and post

18th May 2022

Your Excellency,

We are writing to express how appalled we are with the recent Turkish military actions in Northern Iraq and the ongoing attacks and bombardments in North Eastern Syria. We call on the Turkish government to immediately stop the military operations, withdraw all troops, and end the terrorisation of the civil populations and ethnic cleansing that the Turkish state is carrying out in these areas.

It is astonishing that at a moment when the world quite rightly condemns the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine, and when Turkey is attempting to play a mediatory role to end the conflict, Turkey is at the same time engaging in exactly the same behaviour as the Russian state.

It appears to us that defence against terrorism is the excuse used by both the Russian and Turkish states in order to justify their illegal invasions of sovereign countries.

In our view, and based on the UK's own painful experience in relation to Ireland, only through engagement and dialogue can the deep rooted causes of conflicts be properly addressed and only by bringing all parties to the table can solutions be found.

This is why we have repeatedly urged President Erdogan and the Turkish government to return to the negotiating table and to find a peaceful negotiated solution to the conflict. We repeat that call now.

We are fully aware that the Turkish government did indeed engage with the Kurdish political movement in the period 2013-2015 and understand that such processes are only successful if all parties can properly engage. With this in mind we reiterate our call for the immediate release of imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan so that he can play a full and constructive role in the search for peace.

We firmly reject the simplistic labelling of all opposition to President Erdogan's actions as acts of terrorism and note that the UK All Party Parliamentary Group for Kurds in Turkey and Northern Syria recently called for a review of the listing of the PKK as a terrorist organisation. We further note that the Belgium Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that the PKK is an actor in an internal conflict rather than a terrorist organisation.

Opinion across the world is changing and many people now understand the heroic role that the Kurdish movement played in defeating ISIS, many more are also increasingly aware of the need to stand in solidarity with the Kurdish people's resistance to brutal repression and ethnic cleansing.

With a presidential election looming in 2023 we take this opportunity to urge the current Turkish government to end the violence and repression, and seize the moment to launch a new peace initiative based on dialogue and negotiation.

Although we have never received a response to our repeated letters we hereby once again request a meeting to discuss the situation.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mick Whelan, General Secretary ASLEF

Sarah Woolley, General Secretary BFAWU

Dave Ward, General Secretary CWU

Gary Smith, General Secretary GMB

Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary NEU

Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary NEU

Mark Serwotka, General Secretary PCS

Mick Lynch, General Secretary RMT

John McGowan, General Secretary SWU

Manuel Cortes, General Secretary TSSA

Vicky Blake, General Secretary UCU

Sharon Graham, General Secretary Unite the Union

Doug Nicholls, General Secretary GFTU

Roz Foyer, General Secretary STUC

Shavanah Taj, General Secretary Wales TUC

Clare Mellor, CEO Thompsons Solicitors